

**SOLDIERS' VERSE**

NEW EXCURSIONS INTO ENGLISH POETRY

EDITORS W J TURNER AND SHEILA SHANNON

# SOLDIERS' VERSE

VERSES CHOSEN BY PATRIC DICKINSON

WITH

*ORIGINAL LITHOGRAPHS*

BY

WILLIAM SCOTT

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## *INTRODUCTION*

My dear Vin,

In one of your letters from your prison camp you spoke of "the freedom of a limitation"—a phrase that has been often recalled during the collection of this anthology. Another which constantly returned was from Yeats

I think it better that in times like these  
A poet's tongue be silent

Love, War, and Death were the three subjects for Poetry according to Dante. Love and Death still keep their timelessness but War owing to the development of its mechanical aids has altered its perspective. In Hannibal's time you could have begun a poem on the siege of Saguntum "O War" and there'd have been no necessity to mention a ballista. Whilst war-in-poetry could be generally expressed, or be the spring of catholic human emotion, it remained poetic material. The Napoleonic wars to the Romantics really meant Odes on Liberty, Addresses to Freedom, and attacks on Tyranny. The Crimean War or the Boer War for these reasons did not inspire poets at all, with the exception of "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and the ballads and broadsheets of the period do not happen to fit in here. The Great 1914-18 War is the only war in which poetry has been written on the subject of war, and moreover on behalf of the soldiers who wage it. The Total War of 1939-45 has naturally produced very little War-poetry. For as the scope of war has enlarged the scope of poetry has diminished. The small incident engrosses the poet. It is one of the horrors of our time that tragedy has become commonplace, almost banal.

Our warfare its bombs and rockets and the whole ghastly paraphernalia of death is not directly assimilable into poetry. You may make symbols of it but once you are among its terms poetry seems to desert you or at best becomes a sort of conscript prose in poetic uniform. But War-poems of previous centuries can have little significance to us now as War-poems—they may be good, or bad

poems, but they no longer apply to war as we know it These problems must lead to a series of limitations in time, in actual subject, and of course in personal taste and reading

I suppose there are only two ways of making anthologies the inclusive British Museum method and the exclusive personal choice This anthology at any rate is made out of poems which remain for me real poems—whatever one's definition of poetry may be, there's a basic, arbitrary, instinctive taste which directs and approves, or rejects I think one of the chief justifications of anthologies is that the one limited to the printed page is set free by its companions in the head of the reader An anthology should be provoking in this way Of other personal limitations, you can't fail to notice that nearly all the poems are in a strict form and that they are complete in themselves and not extracted These aren't the only poems about soldiers I have ever read or the only ones I like—they are the ones which happen to fit in with my plan for this anthology

In those days when knowledge of the Classics was a *sine qua non* of the educated man and woman, when therefore we had a reasonable knowledge of our own language, two of the first words we had to learn and to decline were *Bellum*, War, and *Miles*, a Soldier It was something of this spirit I thought that one should bring to an anthology of soldiers' verse There should be poems both Vocative and Genitive as well as the general run of Nominative and Accusative poems in which '*miles gloriosus*' is subject or object There should be a certain amount '*de re militari*', and a certain freedom within the strictness of the declension of *bellum* and *miles* Out of this grew the idea that the whole anthology should be a sort of thematic declension—though its cases merge one into another and are not quite equivalent to the Latin ones

So if you read through from beginning to end I hope you may derive some pleasure from these "cases" I know anthologies are primarily for dipping into and not for consecutive reading, but this fulfills a double purpose you may choose, as it were, freedom or limitation

The whole arrangement and, too, the immediate juxtapositions are not fortuitous For example the R L S rhyme placed after Browning's "Incident of the French Camp" or the Edmund Blunden "War Memorial 1914-1918" before the Dylan Thomas, succeed

(I can only say for me) in making an effect the poems could not and did not try to achieve separately You will discover many of these complements—you may find them stimulating, or irritating, but there is no need to find them at all

Indeed it is this arrangement—immeasurably enhanced by William Scott's lithographs—which I hope will make this selection a genuinely New Excursion into English Verse Take the whole road or stop by the wayside—you can do as you please and that's why I'd like to dedicate this Anthology of Soldiers' Verse to you, for five long years a prisoner-of-war

P D

*The Acknowledgments  
will be found on pages 116 and 117*

## *SOLDIERS' VERSE*

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### I

HILAIRE BELLOC b 1870

#### THE PACIFIST

Pale Ebenezer thought it wrong to fight,  
But Roaring Bill (who killed him) thought it right

SIEGFRIED SASSOON b 1886

#### ANCIENT HISTORY

Adam, a brown old vulture in the rain,  
Shivered below his wind-whipped olive-trees,  
Huddling sharp chin on scarred and scraggy knees,  
He moaned and mumbled to his darkening brain,  
*'He was the grandest of them all — was Cain'*  
'A lion laired in the hills, that none could tire  
'Swift as a stag a stallion of the plain,  
'Hungry and fierce with deeds of huge desire'

Grimly he thought of Abel, soft and fair—  
A lover with disaster in his face,  
And scarlet blossom twisted in bright hair  
'Afraid to fight, was murder more disgrace'  
*'God always hated Cain'* He bowed his head—  
The gaunt wild man whose lovely sons were dead

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT 1862-1938

### THE NON-COMBATANT

Among a race high-handed, strong of heart,  
Sea-rovers, conquerors, builders in the waste,  
He had his birth, a nature too complete,  
Eager and doubtful, no man's soldier sworn  
And no man's chosen captain, born to fail,  
A name without an echo yet he too  
Within the cloister of his narrow days  
Fulfilled the ancestral rights, and kept alive  
The eternal fire, it may be, not in vain,  
For out of those who dropped a downward glance  
Upon the weakling huddled at his prayers,  
Perchance some looked beyond him, and then first  
Beheld the glory, and what shrine it filled,  
And to what Spirit sacred or perchance  
Some heard him chanting, though but to himself,  
The old heroic names and went their way  
And hummed his music on the march to death

A H CLOUGH 1819-1861

*from*

### AMOURS DE VOYAGE

Will they fight? They say so And will the French? I can hardly,  
Hardly think so, and yet — He is come, they say, to Palo,  
He is passed from Monterone, at Santa Severa  
He hath laid up his guns But the Virgin, the Daughter of Roma,  
She hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn, — the Daughter  
of Tiber,  
She hath shaken her head and built barricades against thee!

Will they fight? I believe it Alas! 'tis ephemeral folly,  
Vain and ephemeral folly, of course, compared with pictures,  
Statues, and antique gems! — Indeed and yet indeed too,  
Yet methought, in broad day did I dream, — tell it not in St  
James's,

Whisper it not in thy courts, O Christ Church! — yet did I, waking,  
Dream of a cadence that sings, *Si tombent nos jeunes heros, la*  
*Terre en produit de nouveaux contre vous tous prêts à se battre,*  
Dreamt of great indignations and angers transcendental,  
Dreamt of a sword at my side and a battle-horse underneath me

SIDNEY KEYES 1922 - 1943

#### ADVICE FOR A JOURNEY

The drums mutter for war and soon we must begin  
To seek the country where they say that joy  
Springs flowerlike among the rocks, to win  
The fabulous golden mountain of our peace

O my friends, we are too young  
For explorers, have no skill nor compass,  
Nor even that iron certitude which swung  
Our fathers at their self-fulfilling North

So take no rations, remember not your homes—  
Only the blind and stubborn hope to track  
This wilderness The thoughtful leave their bones  
In windy foodless meadows of despair

Never look back, nor too far forward search  
For the white Everest of your desire,  
The scree roll underfoot and you will never reach  
Those brittle peaks which only clouds may walk

Others have come before you The immortal  
Live like reflections and their frozen faces

Will give you courage to ignore the subtle  
Sneer of the gentian and the iceworn pebble

The fifes cry death and the sharp winds call  
Set your face to the rock, go on, go out  
Into the bad lands of battle, into the cloud-wall  
Of the future, my friends, and leave your fear

Go forth, my friends, the raven is no sibyl,  
Break the clouds' anger with your unchanged faces  
You'll find, maybe, the dream under the hill—  
But never Canaan, nor any golden mountain

A H CLOUGH 1819-1861

*from* •

#### AMOURS DE VOYAGE

*Dulce* it is, and *decorum*, no doubt, for the country to fall, — to Offer one's blood an oblation to Freedom, and die for the Cause, yet Still, individual culture is also something, and no man Finds quite distinct the assurance that he of all others is called on, Or would be justified even, in taking away from the world that Precious creature, himself. Nature sent him here to abide here, Else why send him at all? Nature wants him still, it is likely, On the whole, we are meant to look after ourselves, it is certain Each has to eat for himself, digest for himself, and in general Care for his own dear life, and see to his own preservation, Nature's intentions, in most things uncertain, in this are decisive, Which, on the whole, I conjecture the Romans will follow, and I shall

So we cling to our rocks like limpets, Ocean may bluster, Over and under and round us, we open our shells to imbibe our Nourishment, close them again, and are safe, fulfilling the purpose Nature intended, — a wise one, of course, and a noble, we doubt not Sweet it may be and decorous, perhaps, for the country to die, but, On the whole, we conclude the Romans won't do it, and I shan't

WALT WHITMAN 1819 - 1892

## MANHATTAN ARMING

First, O songs, for a prelude,  
Lightly strike on the stretched tympanum, pride and joy in my city,  
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,  
How at once with lithe limbs, unwaiting a moment, she sprang,  
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!)  
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer than steel!)  
How you sprang — how you threw off the costumes of peace with  
    indifferent hand,  
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife were  
    heard in their stead,  
How you led to the war (that shall serve for our prelude, songs  
    of soldiers),  
How Manhattan drum-taps led

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,  
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares, the lady of this teeming  
    and turbulent city,  
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable wealth,  
With her million children around her, suddenly,  
At dead of night, at news from the south,  
Incensed, struck with clinched hand the pavement

A shock electric, the night sustained it,  
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak poured out its myriads

From the houses then and the workshops, and through all the  
    doorways,  
Leaped they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming

To the drum-taps prompt,  
The young men falling in and arming,  
The mechanics arming, (the trowel, the jack-plane, the blacksmith's  
    hammer, tossed aside with precipitation),

The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge leaving the court,  
The driver deserting his waggon in the street, jumping down,  
    throwing the reins abruptly down on the horses' backs,  
The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper, porter, all leaving,  
Squads gather everywhere by common consent, and arm,  
The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how to wear  
    their accoutrements, they buckle the straps carefully,  
Outdoors arming,indoors arming, the flash of the musket-barrels,  
The white tents cluster in camps, the armed sentries around, the sunrise cannon and again at sunset,  
Armed regiments arrive every day, pass through the city, and embark from the wharves,  
(How good they look, as they tramp down to the river, sweaty,  
    with their guns on their shoulders!)  
How I love them! how I could hug them, with their brown faces,  
    and their clothes and knapsacks covered with dust!)  
The blood of the city up — armed! armed! the cry everywhere,  
The flags flung out from the steeples of churches, and from all the public buildings and stores,  
The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son kisses his mother,  
(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak to detain him,)  
The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding, clearing the way,  
The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd for their favourites,  
The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn along,  
    rumble lightly over the stones,  
(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,  
Soon unlimbered to begin the red business!)  
All the mutter of preparation, all the determined arming,  
The hospital service, the lint, bandages, and medicines,  
The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for in earnest,  
    no mere parade now,

War! an armed race is advancing! the welcome for battle, no  
turning away,  
War! be it weeks, months, or years, an armed race is advancing  
to welcome it

Mannahatta a-march! — and it's O to sing it well!  
It's O for a manly life in the camp

And the sturdy artillery,  
The guns, bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve well the guns  
Unlumber them! (no more as the past forty years for salutes for  
courtesies merely,  
Put in something now besides powder and wadding)

And you, lady of ships! you, Mannahatta,  
Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city,  
Often in peace and wealth you were pensive or covertly frowned  
amid all your children,  
But now you smile with joy, exulting old Mannahatta!

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 1770 - 1850

SONNET

1811

The power of Armies is a visible thing,  
Formal, and circumscribed in time and space,  
But who the limits of that power shall trace  
Which a brave People into light can bring  
Or hide, at will,— for freedom combating  
By just revenge inflamed? No foot may chase,  
No eye can follow, to a fatal place  
That power, that spirit, whether on the wing  
Like the strong wind, or sleeping like the wind  
Within its awful caves — From year to year  
Springs this indigenous produce far and near,  
No craft this subtle element can bind,  
Rising like water from the soil, to find  
In every nook a lip that it may cheer

LIONEL JOHNSON 1867-1902

THE COMING OF WAR, 1889

Gather the people, for the battle breaks

From camping grounds above the valley,  
Gather the men-at-arms, and bid them rally

Because the morn, the battle, wakes

High throned above the mountains and the main,  
Triumphs the sun far down, the pasture plain

To trampling armour shakes

This was the meaning of those plenteous years,

Those unarmed years of peace unbroken

Flashing war crowns them! Now war's trump hath spoken

This final glory in our ears

The old blood of our pastoral fathers now

Riots about our heart, and through our brow

Their sons can have no fears

This was our whispering and haunting dream,

When cornfields flourished, red and golden

When vines hung purple, nor could be withholden

The radiant outburst of their stream

Earth cried to us, that all her laboured store

Was ours that she had more to give, and more

For nothing, did we deem?

We give her back the glory of this hour

O sun and earth! O strength and beauty!

We use you now, we thank you now our duty

We stand to do, mailed in your power

A little people of a favoured land,

Helmed with the blessing of the morn we stand

Our life is at its flower

Gather the people, let the battle break

An hundred peaceful years are over

Now march each man to battle as a lover

For him, whom death shall overtake!  
Sleeping upon this field, about his gloom  
Voices shall pierce, to thrill his sacred tomb,  
    Of pride for his great sake

With melody about us heart and feet  
    Responding to one mighty measure,  
Glad with the splendour of an holy pleasure,  
    Swayed, one and all, as wind sways wheat  
Answering the sunlight with our eyes aglow,  
    Serene, and, proud, and passionate, we go  
    Through airs of morning sweet

Let no man dare to be disheartened now!  
    We challenge death beyond denial  
Against the host of death we make our trial  
    Lord God of Hosts! do thou,  
Who gavest us the fulness of thy sun  
    On fields of peace, perfect war's work begun  
    Warriors, to thee we bow

O life-blood of remembrance! Long ago  
    This land upheld our ancient fathers  
And for this land, their land, our land, now gathers  
    One fellowship against the foe  
The spears flash be they as our mothers' eyes!  
The trump sounds hearken to our fathers' cries!  
    March we to battle so

ALAN SEEGER 1888-1916

### I HAVE A RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH

I have a rendezvous with Death  
At some disputed barricade,  
When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
And apple-blossoms fill the air—  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
When Spring brings back blue days and fair

It may be he shall take my hand  
And lead me into his dark land  
And close my eyes and quench my breath—  
It may be I shall pass him still  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
On some scarred slope of battered hill,  
When Spring comes round again this year  
And the first meadow-flowers appear

God knows 'twere better to be deep  
Pillowed in silk and scented down,  
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,  
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,  
Where hushed awakenings are dear  
But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year,  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous

*from*

AMOURS DE VOYAGE

Now supposing the French or the Neapolitan soldier  
Should by some evil chance come exploring the Maison Serny  
(Where the family English are all to assemble for safety),  
Am I prepared to lay down my life for the British female?  
Really, who knows? One has bowed and talked, till, little by little,  
All the natural heat has escaped of the chivalrous spirit  
Oh, one conformed, of course, but one doesn't die for good manners,  
Stab or shoot, or be shot, by way of graceful attention  
No, if it should be at all, it should be on the barricades there,  
Should I incarnadine ever this inky pacifical finger,  
Sooner far should it be for this vapour of Italy's freedom,  
Sooner far by the side of the d——d and dirty plebeians  
Ah, for a child in the street I could strike, for the full-blown lady—  
Somehow, Eustace, alas! I have not felt the vocation  
Yet these people of course will expect, as of course, my protection,  
Vernon in radiant arms stand forth for the lovely Georgina,  
And to appear, I suppose, were but common civility Yes, and  
Truly I do not desire they should either be killed or offended  
Oh, and of course, you will say, 'When the time comes, you will  
be ready'

Ah, but before it comes, am I to presume it will be so?  
What I cannot feel now, am I to suppose that I shall feel?  
Am I not free to attend for the ripe and indubious instinct?  
Am I forbidden to wait for the clear and lawful perception?  
Is it the calling of man to surrender his knowledge and insight,  
For the mere venture of what may, perhaps, be the virtuous action?  
Must we, walking our earth, discern a little, and hoping  
Some plain visible task shall yet for our hands be assigned us,—  
Must we abandon the future for fear of omitting the present,  
Quit our own fireside hopes at the alien call of a neighbour,  
To the mere possible shadow of Deity offer the victim?

SIEGFRIED SASSOON b 1886

### DREAMERS

Soldiers are citizens of death's gray land,  
Drawing no dividend from time's tomorrows  
In the great hour of destiny they stand,  
Each with his feuds and jealousies and sorrows  
Soldiers are sworn to action, they must win  
Some flaming fatal climax with their lives  
Soldiers are dreamers, when the guns begin  
They think of firelit homes, clean beds, and wives

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,  
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,  
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,  
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain  
Bank-holidays, and picture-shows, and spats,  
And going to the office in the train

A E HOUSMAN 1859 - 1936

### THE STREET SOUNDS TO THE SOLDIERS' TREAD

The street sounds to the soldiers' tread,  
And out we troop to see  
A single redcoat turns his head,  
He turns and looks at me

My man, from sky to sky's so far,  
We never crossed before,  
Such leagues apart the world's ends are,  
We're like to meet no more,

What thoughts at heart have you and I  
We cannot stop to tell,  
But dead or living, drunk or dry,  
Soldier, I wish you well

GEORGE MEREDITH 1828-1909

“ATKINS”

Yonder's the man with his life in his hand,  
Legs on the march for whatever the land,  
    Or to the slaughter, or to the maiming,  
    Getting the dole of a dog for pay  
Laurels he clasps in the words “duty done”,  
England his heart under every sun —  
    Exquisite humour! that gives him a naming  
    Base to the ear as an ass's bray

W H AUDEN b 1907

O WHAT IS THAT SOUND WHICH SO  
THRILLS THE EAR

O what is that sound which so thrills the ear  
    Down in the valley drumming, drumming?  
Only the scarlet soldiers, dear,  
    The soldiers coming

O what is that light I see flashing so clear  
    Over the distance brightly, brightly?  
Only the sun on their weapons, dear,  
    As they step lightly

O what are they doing with all that gear,  
    What are they doing this morning, this morning?  
Only the usual manœuvres, dear,  
    Or perhaps a warning

O why have they left the road down there,  
    Why are they suddenly wheeling, wheeling?  
Perhaps a change in the orders, dear  
    Why are you kneeling?

O haven't they stopped for the doctor's care,  
Haven't they reined their horses, their horses?  
Why, they are none of them wounded, dear,  
None of these forces

O is it the parson they want with white hair,  
Is it the parson, is it, is it?  
No they are passing his gateway, dear,  
Without a visit

O it must be the farmer who lives so near  
It must be the farmer so cunning, so cunning?  
They have passed the farm already, dear,  
And now they are running

O where are you going? stay with me here!  
Were the vows you swore deceiving, deceiving?  
No, I promised to love you dear,  
But I must be leaving

O it's broken the lock and splintered the door,  
O it's the gate where they're turning, turning,  
Their feet are heavy on the floor  
And their eyes are burning

A E HOUSMAN 1859-1936

IN VALLEYS GREEN AND STILL

In valleys green and still  
Where lovers wander maying  
They hear from over hill  
A music playing

Behind the drum and fife,  
Past hawthornwood and hollow,  
Through earth and out of life  
The soldiers follow

The soldier's is the trade  
In any wind or weather  
He steals the heart of maid  
And man together

The lover and his lass  
Beneath the hawthorn lying  
Have heard the soldiers pass,  
And both are sighing

And down the distance they  
With dying note and swelling  
Walk the resounding way  
To the still dwelling

### THE BRIDEGROOM

Call me not false, beloved,  
If, from thy scarce-known breast  
So little time removed,  
In other arms I rest

For this more ancient bride,  
Whom coldly I embrace,  
Was constant at my side  
Before I saw thy face

Our marriage, often set—  
By miracle delayed—  
At last is consummate,  
And cannot be unmade

Live, then, whom Life shall cure,  
Almost, of Memory,  
And leave us to endure  
Its immortality

PAO CHAO d 466 A D

*Translated from the Chinese by Arthur Waley*

### THE SCHOLAR RECRUIT

Now late  
I follow Time's Necessity  
Mounting a barricade I pacify remote tribes  
Discarding my sash I don a coat of rhinoceros-skin  
Rolling up my skirts I shoulder a black bow  
Even at the very start my strength fails  
What will become of me before it's all over?

THOMAS HARDY 1840 - 1928

### MEN WHO MARCH AWAY

What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
Leaving all that here can win us,  
What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye,  
Who watch us stepping by  
With doubt and dolorous sigh?  
Can much pondering so hoodwink you?  
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see—  
Dalliers as they be—  
England's need are we,  
Her distress would leave us rueing  
Nay We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just,  
And that braggarts must  
Surely bite the dust,  
Press we to the field ungrieving,  
In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just

Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
Leaving all that here can win us,  
Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away

WILFRED SCAWEN BLUNT 1840 - 1922

### GIBRALTAR

Seven weeks of sea, and twice seven days of storm  
Upon the huge Atlantic, and once more  
We ride into still water and the calm  
Of a sweet evening screened by either shore  
Of Spain and Barbary Our toils are o'er,  
Our exile is accomplished Once again  
We look on Europe, mistress as of yore  
Of the fair earth and of the hearts of men  
Ay, this is the famed rock which Hercules  
And Goth and Moor bequeathed us At this door  
England stands sentry God! to hear the shrill  
Sweet treble of her fifes upon the breeze  
And at the summons of the rock gun's roar  
To see her redcoats marching from the hill!

C H SORLEY 1895 - 1915

### ALL THE HILLS AND VALES ALONG

All the hills and vales along  
Earth is bursting into song,  
And the singers are the chaps  
Who are going to die perhaps  
    O sing, marching men  
    Till the valleys ring again  
    Give your gladness to earth's keeping,  
    So be glad, when you are sleeping

Cast away regret and rue,  
Think what you are marching to  
Little live, great pass  
Jesus Christ and Barabbas

Were found the same day  
This died, that went his way  
So sing with joyful breath,  
For why, you are going to death  
Teeming earth will surely store  
All the gladness that you pour

Earth that never doubts nor fears,  
Earth that knows of death, not tears,  
Earth that bore with joyful ease  
Hemlock for Socrates,  
Earth that blossomed and was glad  
'Neath the cross that Christ had,  
Shall rejoice and blossom too  
When the bullet reaches you  
Wherefore, men marching  
On the road to death, sing!  
Pour your gladness on earth's head,  
So be merry, so be dead

From the hills and valleys earth  
Shouts back the sound of mirth,  
Tramp of feet and lilt of song  
Ringing all the road along  
All the music of their going,  
Ringing, swinging glad song-throwing,  
Earth will echo still when foot  
Lies numb and voice mute  
On, marching men, on  
To the gates of death with song  
Sow your gladness for earth's reaping,  
So you may be glad, though sleeping  
Strew your gladness on earth's bed  
So be merry, so be dead

HERMAN MELVILLE 1819-1891

BALL'S BLUFF

*A Reverie*  
October 1861

One noonday, at my window in the town,  
I saw a sight—saddest that eyes can see—  
Young soldiers marching lustily  
Unto the wars,  
With fifes, and flags in mottoed pageantry,  
While all the porches, walks, and doors  
Were rich with ladies cheering royally

They moved like Juny morning on the wave,  
Their hearts were fresh as clover in its prime  
(It was the breezy summer-time),  
Life throbbed so strong,  
How should they dream that Death in a rosy clime  
Would come to thin their shining throng?  
Youth feels immortal, like the gods sublime

Weeks passed, and at my window, leaving bed,  
By night I mused, of easeful sleep bereft,  
On those brave boys (Ah War! thy theft),  
Some marching feet  
Found pause at last by cliffs Potomac cleft,  
Wakeful I mused, while in the street  
Far footfalls died away till none were left

SHEILA SHANNON b 1913

## SOLDIER AND GIRL SLEEPING

*(On a painting by William Scott)*

It is late, already, it is night,  
But still they wait still spin the moments out  
There is time yet and they rest  
Side by side on the hard station bench  
For the train will come, will break  
These two apart and bear the half way

Parting in love is not so hard a thing,  
(Leaving within a crystal certitude  
Wrapping within the pain a kernel joy),  
As parting in love's echo,  
For outgoing love bears on its ebbing tide  
All things away and is more sure  
In its finality than Death

These two are sleeping now  
She sleeps so lightly  
Wavering on the further verge of waking,  
But his stillness holds her firm  
In the fixed circle of his dream,  
She lies within the cavities of his being  
The bright imagination of his heart  
And through his darkened eyes sees not  
The falling hand of Time,  
Nor through his sleeping ears can hear  
The tiger trains prowl in and out

They sleep  
And parting has no time for them  
Nor place to hurt them in

URSULA WOOD b 1911

PENELOPE

Certain parting does not wait its hour  
for separation, too soon the shadow lies  
upon the heart and chokes the voice, its power  
drives on the minutes, it implies  
tomorrow while today's still here

They sat by firelight and his shadow fell  
for the last time, she thought, black patterning gold  
sharp on the firelit wall So, to compel  
the evening to outlast the morning's cold  
dawn by the quayside and the unshed tears,

she took a charred twig from the hearth and drew  
the outline of his shadow on the wall  
"These were his features, this the hand I knew "  
She heard her voice saying the words through all  
the future days of solitude and fear

JOHN CLARE 1793-1864

THE SOLDIER

Home furthest off grows dearer from the way,  
And when the army in the Indias lay  
Friends' letters coming from his native place  
Were like old neighbours with their country face  
And every opportunity that came  
Opened the sheet to gaze upon the name  
Of that loved village where he left his sheep  
For more contented peaceful folk to keep,  
And friendly faces absent many a year  
Would from such letters in his mind appear  
And when his pockets, chafing through the case,  
Wore it quite out ere others took the place,  
Right loath to be of company bereft  
He kept the fragments while a bit was left

WILLIAM MORRIS 1834-1896

## THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

“Swerve to the left, son Roger,” he said,  
 “When you catch his eyes through the helmet-slit,  
 Swerve to the left, then out at his head,  
 And the Lord God give you joy of it!”

The blue owls on my father’s hood  
 Were a little dimm’d as I turned away,  
 This giving up of blood for blood  
 Will finish here somehow, to-day

So — when I walk’d out from the tent,  
 Their howling almost blinded me,  
 Yet for all that I was not bent  
 By any shame Hard by, the sea

Made a noise like the aspens where  
 We did that wrong, but now the place  
 Is very pleasant, and the air  
 Blows cool on any passer’s face

And all the wrong is gather’d now  
 Into the circle of these lists—  
 Yea, howl out, butchers! tell me how  
 His hands were cut off at the wrists,

And how Lord Roger bore his face  
 A league above his spear-point, high  
 Above the owls, to that strong place  
 Among the waters — yea, yea, cry

"What a brave champion we have got!  
Sir Oliver, the flower of all  
The Hainault knights" The day being hot,  
He sat beneath a broad white pall,

White linen over all his steel,  
What a good knight he look'd! his sword  
Laid thwart his knees, he liked to feel  
Its steadfast edge clear as his word

And he look'd solemn, how his love  
Smiled whitely on him sick with fear!  
How all the ladies up above  
Twisted their pretty hands! so near

The fighting was — Ellayne! Ellayne!  
They cannot love like you can, who  
Would burn your hands off, if that pain  
Could win a kiss — am I not true

To you for ever? therefore I  
Do not fear death nor anything,  
If I should limp home wounded, why,  
While I lay sick you would but sing,

And soothe me into quiet sleep  
If they spat on the recreaunt knight,  
Threw stones at him, and cursed him deep,  
Why then — what then, your hand would light

So gently on his drawn-up face,  
And you would kiss him, and in soft  
Cool scented clothes would lap him, pace  
The quiet room and weep oft, — oft

Would turn and smile, and brush his cheek  
With your sweet chin and mouth, and in  
The order'd garden you would seek  
The biggest roses — any sin

And these say "No more now my knight,  
Or God's knight any longer" — you  
Being than they so much more white,  
So much more pure and good and true,

Will cling to me for ever — there,  
Is not that wrong turn'd right at last  
Through all these years, and I wash'd clean?  
Say, yea, Ellayne, the time is past,

Since on that Christmas-day last year  
Up to your feet the fire crept,  
And the smoke through the brown leaves sere  
Blinded your dear eyes that you wept,

Was it not I that caught you then,  
And kissed you on the saddle-bow?  
Did not the blue owl mark the men  
Whose spears stood like the corn a-row?

This Oliver is a rught good knight,  
And must needs beat me, as I fear,  
Unless I catch him in the fight,  
My father's crafty way — John, here!

Bring up the men from the south gate,  
To help me if I fall or win,  
For even if I beat, their hate  
Will grow to more than this mere grin

ROBERT FROST b 1875

RANGE - FINDING

The battle rent a cobweb diamond-strung  
And cut a flower beside a ground bird's nest  
Before it stained a single human breast  
The stricken flower bent double and so hung  
And still the bird revisited her young  
A butterfly its fall had dispossessed  
A moment sought in air his flower of rest,  
Then lightly stooped to it and fluttering clung

On the bare upland pasture there had spread  
O'er night 'twixt mullein stalks a wheel of thread  
And straining cables wet with silver dew  
A sudden passing bullet shook it dry  
The indwelling spider ran to greet the fly,  
But finding nothing, sullenly withdrew

THE STAND - TO

Autumn met me to-day as I walked over Castle Hill  
The wind that had set our corn by the ears was blowing still  
Autumn, who takes the leaves and the long days, crisped the air  
With a tang of action, a taste of death, and the wind blew fair

From the east for men and barges massed on the other side—  
Men maddened by numbers or stolid by nature, they have their pride  
As we in work or children, but now a contracting will  
Crumples their meek petitions and holds them poised to kill

Last night a Stand-To was ordered    Thirty men of us here  
Came out to guard the starlit village — my men who wear  
Unwitting the season's beauty, the received truth of the spade—  
Roadmen, farm labourers, masons, turned to another trade

A dog barked over the fields, the candle stars put a sheen  
On the rifles ready, the sandbags shrouded with evergreen  
The dawn wind blew, the stars winked out on the posts where we lay,  
The order came, Stand Down, and thirty went away

Since a cold wind from Europe blows the words back in my teeth,  
Since autumn shortens the days and the odds against our death,  
And the harvest moon is waxing and high tides threaten harm,  
Since last night may be the last night all thirty men go home,

I write this verse to record the men who have watched with me—  
Spot who is good at darts, Squibby at repartee,  
Mark and Cyril, the dead shots, Ralph with a ploughman's gait,  
Gibson, Harris and Long, old hands for the barricade

Whiller the lorry-driver, Francis and Rattlesnake,  
Fred and Charles and Stan — these nights I have lain awake  
And thought of my thirty men and the autumn wind that blows  
The apples down too early and shatters the autumn rose

Destiny, History, Duty, Fortitude, Honour — all  
The words of the politicians seem too big or too small  
For the ragtag fighters of lane and shadow, the love that has grown  
Familiar as working-clothes, faithful as bone to bone

Blow, autumn wind, upon orchard and rose! Blow leaves along  
Our lanes, but sing through me for the lives that are worth a sing!  
Narrowing days have darkened the vistas that hurt my eyes,  
But pinned to the heart of darkness a tattered fire-flag flies

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 1770 - 1850

### THE FRENCH AND SPANISH GUERRILLAS

Hunger, and sultry heat, and nipping blast  
From bleak hill-top, and length of march by night  
Through heavy swamp, or over snow-clad height—  
These hardships ill-sustained, these dangers past,  
The roving Spanish Bands are reached at last,  
Charged, and dispersed like foam but as a flight  
Of scattered quails by signs do reunite,  
So these,—and, heard of once again, are chased  
With combinations of long practised art  
And newly kindled hope, but they are fled—  
Gone are they, viewless as the buried dead  
Where now? — Their sword is at the Foeman's heart!  
And thus from year to year his walk they thwart,  
And hang like dreams around his guilty bed

### THE CAMPAIGN

The snow falls silently through the unnatural forest,  
Falls silently over the frozen brow and frozen hand  
They are terribly sleepy But still their hard bodies  
Move on and on and on over the frozen land

They do not hear the rustle of certain forgotten moments,  
The lamplight falling through the rain on the pear tree and the pears  
The bells on a Sunday morning, and the sweet, solemn faces,  
The sudden joy on a girl's face as she leans over the stairs

They do not quite recall, for even then they did not notice,  
That something precious had gone away, had quietly gone away,  
The hand had grown unsteady, the love had lost its pleasure,  
And the low call of beasts disturbed the calm summer's day

They cannot possibly hear the ruddy approach of evening,  
Or the horses and the naked horsemen approaching the stream  
Snow falls, and they cannot hear the tinkling teacup  
Take on the oracular magnitude and anguish of a dream

They pause And now they fall asleep A strange new power  
Governs their lives, redistributing the happiness and the pain  
And the nameless longings which gave their lives a secret pattern  
Their destinies flow on and on over the frozen plain

Like waves over the sea They sought, in this career of killing,  
Escape from the hushed and paralysed career of the plants  
Snow falls, and the leaning bayonets are glimmering  
In the firelight They sleep None hear the soft advance

Through the treacherous mask of the birches the polar twilight  
Has washed away the necessity for belief or disbelief  
These soldiers do not hear, winding stealthily through the forest  
The savage and irresistible footfalls of their grief

*from*

AMOURS DE VOYAGE

Yes, we are fighting at last, it appears This morning as usual,  
*Murray*, as usual, in hand, I enter the Caffé Nuovo,  
Seating myself with a sense as it were of a change in the weather,  
Not understanding, however, but thinking mostly of Murray,  
And, for to-day is their day, of the Campidoglio Marbles,  
*Caffè-latte*! I call to the waiter, — and *Non c' è latte*,  
This is the answer he makes me, and this is the sign of a battle  
So I sit, and truly they seem to think anyone else more  
Worthy than me of attention I wait for my milkless *nero*,  
Free to observe undistracted all sorts and sizes of persons,  
Blending civilian and soldier in strangest costume, coming in, and  
Gulping in hottest haste, still standing, their coffee, — withdrawing  
Eagerly, jangling a sword on the steps, or jogging a musket  
Slung to the shoulder behind They are fewer, moreover, than usual,  
Much and silenter far, and so I begin to imagine  
Something is really afloat Ere I leave, the Caffé is empty,  
Empty too the streets, in all its length the Corso  
Empty, and empty I see to my right and left the Condotti

Twelve o'clock, on the Pincian Hill, with lots of English,  
Germans, Americans, French,—the Frenchmen, too, are protected,—  
So we stand in the sun, but afraid of a probable shower,  
So we stand and stare, and see, to the left of St Peter's,  
Smoke, from the cannon, white,—but that is at intervals only,—  
Black, from a burning house, we suppose, by the Cavalleggiari,  
And we believe we discern some lines of men descending  
Down through the vineyard-slopes, and catch a bayonet gleaming  
Every ten minutes, however,—in this there is no misconception,—  
Comes a great white puff from behind Michel Angelo's dome, and  
After a space the report of a real big gun,—not the Frenchman's!—  
That must be doing some work And so we watch and conjecture

Shortly, an Englishman comes, who says he has been to St Peter's,  
Seen the Piazza and troops, but that is all he can tell us,  
So we watch and sit, and, indeed, it begins to be tiresome —

All this smoke is outside, when it has come to the inside,  
It will be time, perhaps, to descend and retreat to our houses  
    Half-past one, or two The report of small arms frequent,  
Sharp and savage indeed, that cannot all be for nothing  
So we watch and wonder, but guessing is tiresome, very  
Weary of wondering, watching, and guessing, and gossiping idly  
Down I go, and pass through the quiet streets with the knots of  
National Guards patrolling, and flags hanging out at the windows  
English, American, Danish,—and, after offering to help an  
Irish family moving *en masse* to the Maison Serny,  
After endeavouring idly to minister balm to the trembling  
Quinquagenarian fears of two lone British spinsters,  
Go to make sure of my dinner before the enemy enter  
But by this there are signs of stragglers returning, and voices  
Talk, though you don't believe it, of guns and prisoners taken  
And on the walls you read the first bulletin of the morning —  
This is all that I saw, and all I know of the battle

ANONYMOUS C 124 B C

*Translated from the Chinese by Arthur Waley*

#### FIGHTING SOUTH OF THE CASTLE

They fought south of the Castle,  
They died north of the wall  
They died in the moors and were not buried  
Their flesh was the food of crows  
“Tell the crows we are not afraid,  
We have died in the moors and cannot be buried  
Crows, how can our bodies escape you?”  
The waters flowed deep  
And the rushes in the pool were dark.  
The riders fought and were slain  
Their horses wander neighing

By the bridge there was a house  
Was it south, was it north?  
The harvest was never gathered  
How can we give you your offerings?  
You served your Prince faithfully,  
Though all in vain  
I think of you, faithful soldiers,  
Your service shall not be forgotten  
For in the morning you went out to battle  
And at night you did not return

JAMES ELROY FLECKER 1884 - 1915

### TAOPING

Across the vast blue-shadow-sweeping plain  
The gathered armies darken through the grain,  
Swinging curved swords and dragon-sculptured spears,  
Footmen, and tiger-hearted cavaliers  
Their Government (whose fragrance Poets sing)  
Hath bidden break the rebels of Taoping,  
And fire and fell the monstrous fort of fools  
Who dream that men may dare the deathless rules  
Such, grim example even now can show  
Where high above the Van, in triple row,  
First fiery blossom of rebellion's tree,  
Twelve spear-stemmed heads are dripping silently  
(On evil day you sought, O ashen lips,  
The kiss of women from our town of ships,  
Nor ever dreamt, O spies, of falser spies,  
The poppied cup and passion-mocking eyes!)

By these grim civil trophies undismayed,  
In lacquered panoplies the chiefs parade  
Behind, the plain's floor rocks the armies come  
The rose-round lips blow battles horns the drum  
Booms oriental measure Earth exults

And still behind, the tottering catapults  
Pulled by slow slaves, grey backs with crimson lines,  
Roll resolutely west And still behind,  
Down the canal's hibiscus-shaded marge  
The glossy mules draw on the cedar barge,  
Railed silver, blue-silk-curtained, which within  
Bears the Commander, the old Mandarin,  
Who never left his palace gates before,  
But hath grown blind reading great books of war

Now level on the land and cloudless red  
The sun's slow circle dips toward the dead  
Night-hunted, all the monstrous flags are furled  
The Armies halt, and round them halts the World  
A phantom wind flies out among the rice,  
Hush turns the twin horizons in her vice,  
Air thickens earth is pressed upon earth's core  
The cedar barge swings gently to the shore  
Among her silver shadows and the swans  
The blind old man sets down his pipe of bronze  
The long whips cease The slaves slacken the chain  
The gaunt-towered engines space the silent plain  
The hosts like men held in a frozen dream  
Stiffen The breastplates drink the scarlet gleam  
But the Twelve Heads with shining sockets stare  
Further and further West Have they seen there,  
Black on blood's sea and huger than Death's wing,  
Their *cannon-bowelled* fortress of Taoping?

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK 1785-1866

## THE WAR SONG OF DINAS VAWR

The mountain sheep are sweeter,  
But the valley sheep are fatter,  
We therefore deemed it meeter  
To carry off the latter  
We made an expedition,  
We met an host, and quelled it,  
We forced a strong position,  
And killed the men who held it

On Dyfed's richest valley,  
Where herds of kine were browsing,  
We made a mighty sally,  
To furnish our carousing  
Fierce warriors rushed to meet us,  
We met them, and o'erthrew them  
They struggled hard to beat us,  
But we conquered them, and slew them

As we drove our prize at leisure,  
The King marched forth to catch us  
His rage surpassed all measure,  
But his people could not match us  
He fled to his hall-pillars,  
And, ere our force we led off,  
Some sacked his house and cellars,  
While others cut his head off

We there, in strife bewildering,  
Spilt blood enough to swim in  
We orphaned many children,  
And widowed many women.  
The eagles and the ravens  
We glutted with our foemen,  
The heroes and the cravens,  
The spearmen and the bowmen

We brought away from battle,  
And much their land bemoaned them,  
Two thousand head of cattle,  
And the head of him who owned them  
Ednyfed, King of Dyfed,  
His head was borne before us,  
His wine and beasts supplied our feasts,  
And his overthrow, our chorus

HERMAN MELVILLE 1819-1891

## SHILOH

*A Requiem, April, 1862*

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,  
The swallows fly low  
Over the field in clouded days,  
The forest-field of Shiloh—  
Over the field where April rain  
Solaced the parched one stretched in pain  
Through the pause of night  
That followed the Sunday fight  
    Around the church of Shiloh—  
The church so lone, the log-built one,  
That echoed to many a parting groan  
    And natural prayer  
    Of dying foemen mingled there—  
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—  
    Fame or country least their care.  
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)  
    But now they lie low,  
While over them the swallows skim  
    And all is hushed at Shiloh

CHILD OF WAR

Her ivory face, quivering but trembling not,  
Upheld against a sky of angry storm,  
She stands upon her savage chariot,  
Fronting the field of Death, a silent form  
The eagle's daughter, this day she forgot  
Pity and peace for the first time, and went  
To watch the waves of war break, and be spent

Homeward, with shadows passing on her face,  
Strange lights with strange tears battling in her eyes,  
She goes the triumph way of her old race,  
Watching the eagles gather in the skies  
Tasted hath she this day death's busy place  
And in her heart called up to equal fight,  
Daughter of eagles, loathing and delight

WILLIAM MORRIS 1834 - 1896

THE KNIGHT IN PRISON

Wearily, drearily,  
Half the day long,  
Flap the great banners  
High over the stone,  
Strangely and eerily  
Sounds the wind's song,  
Bending the banner-poles

While, all alone,  
Watching the loophole's spark,  
Lie I, with life all dark,  
Feet tethered, hands fetter'd  
Fast to the stone,  
The grim walls square letter'd  
With prison'd men's groan

Still strain the banner-poles  
Through the wind's song,  
Westward the banner rolls  
Over my wrong

ALICE MEYNELL 1847-1922

SUMMER IN ENGLAND 1914

On London fell a clearer light,  
Caressing pencils of the sun  
Defined the distances, the white  
Houses transfigured one by one,  
The "long, unlovely street" impearled  
O what a sky has walked the world!

Most happy year! And out of town  
The hay was prosperous, and the wheat,  
The silken harvest climbed the down,  
Moon after moon was heavenly-sweet  
Stroking the bread within the sheaves,  
Looking twixt apples and their leaves

And while this rose made round her cup,  
The armies died convulsed And when  
This chaste young silver sun went up  
Softly, a thousand shattered men,  
One wet corruption, heaped the plain  
After a league-long throb of pain

Flower following tender flower, and birds,  
And berries, and benignant skies  
Made thrive the serried flocks and herds —  
Yonder are men shot through the eyes  
Love, hide thy face  
From man's unpardonable race!

THE SENTRY

We'd found an old Boche dug-out, and he knew,  
And gave us hell, for shell on frantic shell  
Hammered on top, but never quite burst through  
Rain guttering down in waterfalls of slime  
Kept slush waist-high that, rising hour by hour,  
Choked up the steps too thick with clay to climb  
What murk of air remained stank old, and sour  
With fumes of whizz-bangs, and the smell of men  
Who'd lived there years, and left their curse in the den,  
If not their corpses

There we herded from the blast  
Of whizz-bangs, but one found our door at last,—  
Buffeting eyes and breath, snuffing the candles  
And thud! flump! thud! down the steep steps came thumping  
And splashing in the flood, deluging muck—  
The sentry's body, then, his rifle, handles  
Of old Boche bombs, and mud in ruck on ruck  
We dredged him up, for killed, until he whined  
“O, sir, my eyes — I’m blind — I’m blind, I’m blind!”  
Coaxing I held a flame against his lids  
And said if he could see the least blurred light  
He was not blind, in time he’d get all right  
“I can’t,” he sobbed   Eyeballs, huge-bulged like squids’,  
Watch my dreams still, but I forgot him there  
In posting next for duty, and sending a scout  
To beg a stretcher somewhere, and floundering about  
To other posts under the shrieking air

Those other wretches, how they bled and spewed,  
And one who would have drowned himself for good,—  
I try not to remember these things now'  
Let dread hark back for one word only   how  
Half listening to that sentry's moans and jumps,

And the wild chattering of his broken teeth,  
Renewed most horribly whenever crumps  
Pummelled the roof and slogged the air beneath—  
Through the dense din, I say, we heard him shout  
“I see your lights!” But ours had long died out

SIEGFRIED SASSOON b 1886

### DOES IT MATTER

Does it matter?—losing your legs?  
For people will always be kind,  
And you need not show that you mind  
When the others come in after football  
To gobble their muffins and eggs

Does it matter?—losing your sight? .  
There's such splendid work for the blind,  
And people will always be kind,  
As you sit on the terrace remembering  
And turning your face to the light

Do they matter? — those dreams from the pit? . . .  
You can drink and forget and be glad,  
And people won't say that you're mad  
For they'll know that you've fought for your countr  
And no one will worry a bit

THOMAS HOOD 1799 - 1845

FAITHLESS NELLIE GRAY

Ben Battle was a soldier bold,  
And used to war's alarms,  
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,  
So he laid down his arms

Now as they bore him off the field,  
Said he, 'Let others shoot,  
For here I leave my second leg,  
And the forty-second Foot!'

The army-surgeons made him limbs,  
Said he — 'They're only pegs  
But there's as wooden members quite  
As represent my legs!'

Now Ben he loved a pretty maid,  
Her name was Nellie Gray  
So he went to pay her his devours  
When he'd devoured his pay!

But when he called on Nellie Gray,  
She made him quite a scoff,  
And when she saw his wooden legs  
Began to take them off !

'O, Nellie Gray! O, Nellie Gray!  
Is this your love so warm?  
The love that loves a scarlet coat  
Should be more uniform!'

She said, 'I loved a soldier once,  
For he was blythe and brave,  
But I will never have a man  
With both legs in the grave!'

▲

'Before you had those timber toes,  
Your love I did allow,  
But then, you know, you stand upon  
Another footing now!'

'O, Nellie Gray! O, Nellie Gray!  
For all your jeering speeches,  
At duty's call, I left my legs,  
In Badajos's *breaches*!'

'Why then,' she said, 'you've lost the feet  
Of legs in war's alarms,  
And now you cannot wear your shoes  
Upon your feats of arms!'

'Oh, false and fickle Nellie Gray,  
I know why you refuse —  
Though I've no feet some other man  
Is standing in my shoes!'

'I wish I ne'er had seen your face,  
But now, a long farewell!  
For you will be my death, alas!  
You will not be my *Nell*!'

Now when he went from Nellie Gray,  
His heart so heavy got—  
And life was such a burden grown,  
It made him take a knot!'

So round his melancholy neck,  
A rope he did entwine,  
And, for his second time in life,  
Enlisted in the Line!'

One end he tied around a beam,  
And then removed his pegs,

And as his legs were off, — of course,  
He soon was off his legs!

And there he hung until he was dead  
As any nail in town,—  
For though distress had cut him up,  
It could not cut him down!

A dozen men sat on his corpse  
To find out why he died—  
And they buried Ben in four cross-roads  
With a stake in his inside!

THOMAS HARDY 1840 - 1928

### THE MAN HE KILLED

“Had he and I but met  
By some old ancient Inn,  
We should have sat us down to wet  
Right many a nipperkin!

“But ranged as infantry  
And staring face to face,  
I shot at him as he at me,  
And killed him in his place

“I shot him dead because—  
Because he was my foe,  
Just so. my foe of course he was;  
That’s clear enough, although

"He thought he'd list, perhaps,  
Offhand like — Just as I—  
Was out of work — had sold his traps—  
No other reason why

"Yes, quaint and curious war is!  
You shoot a fellow down  
You'd treat if met where any bar is,  
Or help to half-a-crown "

ROY CAMPBELL b 1902

### HIALMAR

The firing ceased and like a wounded foe  
The day bled out in crimson wild and high  
A far hyena sent his voice of woe  
Tingling in faint hysteria through the sky

Thick lay the fatal harvest of the fight  
In the grey twilight when the newly dead  
Collect those brindled scavengers of night  
Whose bloodshot eyes must candle them to bed

The dead slept on but one among them rose  
Out of his trance, and turned a patient eye  
To where like cankers in a burning rose,  
Out of the fading scarlet of the sky,

Great birds, descending, settled on the stones  
He knew their errand and he knew how soon  
The wolf must make a pulpit of their bones  
To skirl his shrill hosannas to the moon

Great adjutants came wheeling from the hills,  
And chaplain crows with smug, self-righteous face,

And vultures bald and red about the gills  
As any hearty colonel at the base

All creatures that grow fat on beauty's wreck,  
They ranged themselves expectant round the kill,  
And like a shrivelled arm each raw, red neck  
Lifted the rusty dagger of its bill

Thus to the largest of that bony tribe  
'O merry bird,' he shouted, 'work your will,  
I offer my clean body as a bribe  
That when upon its flesh you've gorged your fill,

'You'll take my heart and bear it in your beak  
To where my sweetheart combs her yellow hair  
Beside the Vaal and if she bids you speak  
Tell her you come to represent me there

'Flounce out your feathers in their sleekest trim,  
Affect the brooding softness of the dove—  
Yea, smile, thou skeleton so foul and grim,  
As fits the bland ambassador of love!

'And tell her, when the nights are wearing late  
And the grey moonlight smoulders on her hair,  
To brood no more upon her ghostly mate  
Nor on the phantom children she would bear

'Tell her I fought as blindly as the rest,  
That none of them had wronged me whom I killed,  
And she may seek within some other breast  
The promise that I leave her unfulfilled

'I should have been too tired for love or mirth  
Stung as I am, and sickened by the truth—  
Old men have hunted beauty from the earth  
Over the broken bodies of our youth!'

ALUN LEWIS 1920 - 1944

AFTER DUNKIRK

I have been silent a lifetime  
As a stabbed man,  
And stolid, showing nothing  
As a refugee  
But inwardly I have wept  
The blood has flown inwardly into the spirit  
Through the gaping wound of the world  
And only the little worm,  
The small white tapeworm of the soul,  
Lived on unknown within my blood

But now I have this boon, to speak again,  
I have no more desire to express  
The old relationships, of love fulfilled  
Or stultified, capacity for pain,  
Nor to say gracefully all that the poets have said  
Of one or other of the old compulsions  
For now the times are gathered for confession

First, then, remember Faith  
Haggard with thoughts that complicate  
What statesmen's speeches try to simplify,  
Horror of war, the ear half-catching  
Rumours of rape in crumbling towns,  
Love of mankind, impelling men  
To murder and to mutilate, and then  
Despair of man that nurtures self-contempt  
And makes men toss their careless lives away,  
While joy becomes an idiot's grin  
Fixed in a shaving mirror in whose glass  
The brittle systems of the world revolve.

And next, the rough immediate life of camp  
And barracks where the phallic bugle rules  
The regimented orchestra of love,

The subterfuges of democracy, the stench  
Of breath in crowded tents, the grousing queues,  
And bawdy songs incessantly resung  
And dull relaxing in the dirty bar,  
THE COUNTRY OF ALL THAT IS

WALTER DE LA MARE b 1873

## KEEP INNOCENCY

Like an old battle, youth is wild  
With bugle and spear, and counter cry,  
Fanfare and drummery, yet a child  
Dreaming of that sweet chivalry,  
The piercing terror cannot see

He, with a mild and serious eye,  
Along the azure of the years,  
Sees the sweet pomp sweep hurtling by,  
But he sees not death's blood and tears,  
Sees not the plunging of the spears

And all the strident horror of  
Horse and rider, in red defeat,  
Is only music fine enough  
To lull him into slumber sweet  
In fields where ewe and lambkin bleat

O, if with such simplicity  
Himself take arms and suffer war,  
With beams his targe shall gilded be,  
Though in the thickening gloom be far  
The steadfast light of any star!

Though hoarse War's eagle on him perch,  
Quickened with guilty lightnings — there  
It shall in vain for terror search,  
Where a child's eyes 'neath bloody hair  
Gaze purely through the dingy air

And when the wheeling rout is spent,  
Though in the heaps of slain he lie,  
Or lonely in his last content,  
Quenchless shall burn in secrecy  
The flame Death knows his victors by.

PATRIC DICKINSON b 1914

## WAR

Cold are the stones  
That built the wall of Troy,  
Cold are the bones  
Of the dead Greek boy

Who for some vague thought  
Of honour fell,  
Nor why he fought  
Could clearly tell

Innocence hired to kill  
Lies pitilessly dead  
Stone and bone lie still  
Helen turns in bed

STEPHEN SPENDER b 1909

## ULTIMA RATIO REGUM

The guns spell money's ultimate reason  
In letters of lead on the spring hillside  
But the boy lying dead under the olive trees  
Was too young and too silly  
To have been notable to their important eye  
He was a better target for a kiss

When he lived, tall factory hooters never summoned him  
Nor did restaurant plate-glass doors revolve to wave him in  
His name never appeared in the papers  
The world maintained its traditional wall  
Round the dead with their gold sunk deep as a well,  
While his life, intangible as a Stock Exchange rumour, drifted outside

O too lightly he threw down his cap  
One day when the breeze threw petals from the trees  
The unflowering wall sprouted with guns,  
Machine-gun anger quickly scythed the grasses,  
Flags and leaves fell from hands and branches,  
The tweed cap rotted in the nettles

Consider his life which was valueless  
In terms of employment, hotel ledgers, news files  
Consider One bullet in ten thousand kills a man  
Ask Was so much expenditure justified  
On the death of one so young and so silly  
Lying under the olive trees, O world, O death ?

ROBERT SOUTHEY 1774 - 1843

### THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM

It was a summer evening,  
Old Kaspar's work was done,  
And he before his cottage door  
Was sitting in the sun,  
And by him sported on the green  
His little grandchild Wilhelmine

She saw her brother Peterkin  
Roll something large and round,  
Which he beside the rivulet  
In playing there had found,  
He came to ask what he had found,  
That was so large, and smooth, and round

Old Kaspar took it from the boy,  
Who stood expectant by,  
And then the old man shook his head,  
And, with a natural sigh,  
"Tis some poor fellow's skull," said he,  
"Who fell in the great victory

"I find them in the garden,  
For there's many here about,  
And often when I go to plough,  
The ploughshare turns them out!  
For many thousand men," said he,  
"Were slain in that great victory "

"Now tell us what 'twas all about,"  
Young Peterkin, he cries,  
And little Wilhelmine looks up  
With wonder-waiting eyes,  
"Now tell us all about the war,  
And what they fought each other for "

"It was the English," Kaspar cried,  
"Who put the French to rout,  
But what they fought each other for,  
I could not well make out,  
But everybody said," quoth he,  
"That 'twas a famous victory

"My father lived at Blenheim then,  
Yon little stream hard by;  
They burnt his dwelling to the ground,  
And he was forced to fly,  
So with his wife and child he fled,  
Nor had he where to rest his head

"With fire and sword the country round  
Was wasted far and wide,  
And many a childing mother then,

And new-born baby died,  
But things like that, you know, must be  
At every famous victory

“They say it was a shocking sight  
After the field was won,  
For many thousand bodies here  
Lay rotting in the sun,  
But things like that, you know, must be  
After a famous victory

“Great praise the Duke of Marlbro’ won,  
And our good Prince Eugene ”  
“Why ’twas a very wicked thing ! ”  
Said little Wilhelmine  
“Nay nay my little girl,” quoth he,  
“It was a famous victory

“And every body praised the Duke  
Who this great fight did win ”  
“But what good came of it at last ? ”  
Quoth little Peterkin  
“Why that I cannot tell,” said he,  
“But ’twas a famous victory ”

WALLACE STEVENS b 1879

THE DEATH OF A SOLDIER

Life contracts and death is expected,  
As in a season of autumn  
The soldier falls

He does not become a three days personage,  
Imposing his separation,  
Calling for pomp

Death is absolute and without memorial,  
As in a season of autumn,  
When the wind stops,

When the wind stops and, over the heavens,  
The clouds go, nevertheless,  
In their direction

ERNEST RHYS b 1859

LOST IN FRANCE

He had the plowman's strength  
In the grasp of his hand  
He could see a crow  
Three miles away,  
And the trout beneath the stone  
He could hear the green oats growing,  
And the sou'-west making rain,  
And the wheel upon the hill  
When it left the level road  
He could make a gate, and dig a pit,  
And plow as straight as stone can fall  
And he is dead

EDWARD THOMAS 1878-1917

A PRIVATE

This ploughman dead in battle slept out of doors  
Many a frozen night, and merrily  
Answered staid drinkers, good bedmen, and all bores  
'At Mrs Greenland's Hawthorn Bush,' said he,  
'I slept' None knew which bush Above the town,  
Beyond "The Drover," a hundred spot the down  
In Wiltshire And where now at last he sleeps  
More sound in France — that, too, he secret keeps

EDWARD THOMAS 1878-1917

IN MEMORIAM

Easter 1915

The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood  
This Eastertide call into mind the men,  
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should  
Have gathered them and will do never again

ROBERT FROST b 1875

A SOLDIER

He is that fallen lance that lies as hurled,  
That lies uplifted now, come dew, come rust,  
But still lies pointed as it ploughed the dust  
If we who sight along it round the world,  
See nothing worthy to have been its mark,  
It is because like men we look too near,  
Forgetting that as fitted to the sphere,  
Our missiles always make too short an arc  
They fall, they rip the grass, they intersect  
The curve of earth, and striking break their own,  
They make us cringe for metal -point on stone  
But this we know, the obstacle that checked  
And tripped the body, shot the spirit on  
Further than target ever showed or shone

WALT WHITMAN 1819-1892

### A SIGHT IN CAMP

A sight in camp in the daybreak grey and dim,  
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the hospital tent,  
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there unattended lying,  
Over each a blanket spread, ample brownish woollen blanket,  
Grey and heavy blanket, folding, covering all

Curious I halt and silent stand,  
There with light fingers I from the face of the nearest, the first  
    just lift the blanket,  
Who are you, elderly man so gaunt and grim with well-gray'd  
    hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?  
Who are you my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step — and who are you my child and darling?  
Who are you, sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third — a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of  
    beautiful yellow-white ivory  
Young man I think I know you — I think this face is the face  
    of the Christ Himself,  
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again He lies

HERMAN MELVILLE 1819-1891

### ON THE HOME GUARDS

*Who perished in the defence of Lexington, Missouri*

The men who here in harness died  
    Fell not in vain, though in defeat  
They by their end well fortifyed  
    The Cause, and built retreat  
(With memory of their valour tried)  
For emulous hearts in many an after fray—  
Hearts sore beset, which died at bay

JOHN MCCRAE

## IN FLANDERS FIELDS

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
    That mark our place, and in the sky  
    The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below

We are the dead Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
    Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
    In Flanders fields

Take up our quarrel with the foe  
To you from failing hands we throw  
    The torch, be yours to hold it high  
    If ye break faith with us who die,  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
    In Flanders fields

ALUN LEWIS 1920 - 1944

## ON A BEREAVED GIRL

She who yielded once  
To the absolute of joy  
Without the sanction of the Church  
Is shrived now by the dying boy  
Whose white absolving hands have laid  
Silence upon her tongue and in her head

She knows now in this grey  
Negation of her life  
That she can find no way  
To lie beside him as his wife  
And share his everlasting bed.

This further truth she knows—  
Which Life must leave unsaid—  
That the fled-away is eternal within her  
And the devilry of the dead  
Is also passionately flung away for ever  
As she by hidden paths is led

By his deep silence summoned down  
Through the sunken worlds of birth  
Into the final grim delirium  
Of the act of Death-on-Earth,  
And deeper still, to where all action  
Is sinless, sexless, and reverts  
Into the slime of thought which rots away  
The grafted skin and clinging cerements,  
The little caves and meadows of the flesh,  
And all the fond forgotten lineaments

And leaves the floating mesh,  
The soul,  
Some shape,  
Unknown

EDWARD L. DAVISON

NOCTURNE

Be thou at peace this night  
Wherever be thy bed,  
Thy slumbering be light,  
The fearful dreams be dead  
Within thy lovely head,  
God keep thee in His sight

No hint of love molest  
Thy quiet mind again,  
Night fold thee to her breast  
And hush thy crying pain,  
Let memory in vain  
Conspire against thy rest

So may thy thoughts be lost  
In the full hush of sleep  
Lest any sight accost  
Thine eyes to make them weep,  
In darkness buried deep  
For ever be my ghost

WILFRED OWEN 1893 - 1918

FUTILITY

Move him into the sun—  
Gently its touch awoke him once,  
At home, whispering of fields unsown  
Always it woke him, even in France,  
Until this morning, and this snow  
If anything might rouse him now  
The kind old sun will know

Think how it wakes the seeds,—  
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star  
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,  
Full-nerved — still warm — too hard to stir ?  
Was it for this the clay grew tall ?  
— O what made fatuous sunbeams toil  
To break earth's sleep at all ?

EDMUND BLUNDEN b 1896

## THE MEMORIAL

1914-1918

Against this lantern, shrill, alone  
The wind springs out of the plain  
Such winds as this must fly and moan  
Round the summit of every stone  
On every hill, and yet a strain  
Beyond the measure elsewhere known  
Seems here

Who cries? Who mingles with the gale?  
Whose touch, so anxious and so weak, invents  
A coldness in the coldness? in this veil  
Of whirling mist what hue of clay consents?  
Can atoms intercede?

And are those shafted bold constructions there,  
Mines more than golden, wheels that outrace need,  
Crowded corons, victorious chimneys — are  
Those touched with question too? pale with the dream  
Of those who in this aether-stream  
Are urging yet their painful, woundful theme?

Day flutters as a curtain, stirred  
By a hidden hand, the eye grows blurred  
Those towns, uncrystalled, fade  
The wind from north and east and south  
Comes with its starved white mouth  
And at this crowning trophy cannot rest—  
No, speaks as something past plain words distressed

Be still, if these your voices are, this monolith  
For you and your high sleep was made  
Some have had less  
No gratitude in deathlessness ?  
No comprehension of the tribute paid ?

You would speak still ? Who with ?

DYLAN THOMAS b 1914

THE HAND THAT SIGNED THE PAPER  
FELLED A CITY

The hand that signed the paper felled a city,  
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,  
Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country,  
These five Kings did a King to death

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,  
The finger joints are cramped with chalk,  
A goose's quill has put an end to murder  
That put an end to talk.

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,  
And famine grew, and locusts came,  
Great is the hand that holds dominion over  
Man by a scribbled name

The five Kings count the dead but do not soften  
The crusted wound nor pat the brow,  
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven,  
Hands have no tears to flow

G K CHESTERTON 1874-1936

ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The men that worked for England  
They have their graves at home,  
And bees and birds of England  
About the cross can roam

But they that fought for England,  
Following a falling star,  
Alas, alas for England  
They have their graves afar

And they that rule in England,  
In stately conclave met,  
Alas, alas for England  
They have no graves as yet

RUDYARD KIPLING 1865-1936

MESOPOTAMIA 1917

They shall not return to us, the resolute, the young,  
The eager and whole-hearted whom we gave  
But the men who left them thrifly to die in their own dung,  
Shall they come with years and honour to the grave?

They shall not return to us, the strong men coldly slain  
In sight of help denied from day to day  
But the men who edged their agonies and chid them in their pain,  
Are they too strong and wise to put away?

Our dead shall not return to us while Day and Night divide—  
Never while the bars of sunset hold  
But the idle-minded overlings who quibbled while they died,  
Shall they thrust for high employments as of old?

Shall we only threaten and be angry for an hour?  
When the storm is ended shall we find  
How softly but how swiftly they have sidled back to power  
By the favour and contrivance of their kind?  
  
Even while they soothe us, while they promise large amends,  
Even while they make a show of fear,  
Do they call upon their debtors, and take counsel with their friends,  
To confirm and re-establish each career?

Their lives cannot repay us — their death could not undo —  
The shame that they have laid upon our race  
But the slothfulness that wasted and the arrogance that slew,  
Shall we leave it unabated in its place?

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 1770-1850

NOVEMBER

1806

Another year! — another deadly blow!  
Another mighty Empire overthrown!  
And We are left, or shall be left, alone,  
The last that dare to struggle with the Foe  
'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know  
That in ourselves our safety must be sought,  
That by our own right hands it must be wrought,  
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low  
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!  
We shall exult, if they who rule the land  
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,  
Wise, upright, valiant, not the servile band,  
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,  
And honour which they do not understand

LORD BYRON 1788-1824

STANZAS

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,  
Let him combat for that of his neighbours,  
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,  
And get knocked on the head for his labours

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,  
And is always as nobly requited,  
Then battle for freedom wherever you can,  
And, if not shot or hanged, you'll get knighted

EDWARD THOMAS 1878-1917

THIS IS NO CASE OF PETTY  
RIGHT OR WRONG

This is no case of petty right or wrong  
That politicians or philosophers  
Can judge I hate not Germans, nor grow hot  
With love of Englishmen, to please newspapers  
Beside my hate for one fat patriot  
My hatred of the Kaiser is love true —  
A kind of god he is, banging a gong  
But I have not to choose between the two,  
Or between justice and injustice Dinned  
With war and argument I read no more  
Than in the storm smoking along the wind  
Athwart the wood Two witches' cauldrons roar  
From one the weather shall rise clear and gay,  
Out of the other an England beautiful  
And like her mother that died yesterday  
Little I know or care if, being dull,  
I shall miss something that historians  
Can rake out of the ashes when perchance

The phoenix broods serene above their ken  
But with the best and meanest Englishmen  
I am one in crying, God save England, lest  
We lose what never slaves and cattle blessed  
The ages made her that made us from dust  
She is all we know and live by, and we trust  
She is good and must endure, loving her so  
And as we love ourselves we hate her foe

ALAN ROOK b 1913

#### DUNKIRK PIER

Deeply across the waves of our darkness fear,  
like the silent octopus, feeling, groping, clear  
as a star's reflection, nervous and cold as a bird,  
tells us that pain, tells us that death is near

Why should a woman telling above her fire  
incantations of evening, thoughts that are  
older and paler than history, why should this lark  
exploring extinction and oneness of self and air

remind us that, lonely and lost as flowers in deserted  
weed-mastered gardens, each faint face averted  
from the inescapable confusion, for each of us slowly  
death on his last, most hideous journey has started ?

What was our sin ? — that heartless to the end  
falls now the heavy sickle on foe, on friend,  
and those that we love, value and regret  
surrender quickest to death's empty hand

Failure to suffer ? We who in years past  
have suffered, yes, in this or that, but in the last  
irrevocable act of suffering, as a dog suffers deeply,  
blindly, completely, are not versed

What hope for the future? Can we who see the tide  
ebbing along the shore, the greedy, lined  
with shadows, dare with puny words support  
a future which belongs to others? Dare we bind

now, at this last moment of sunshine above  
the crests of oncoming events, like waves which move  
remorselessly nearer, future generations  
with sacrifice? *We* who taught hate, expect them to love?

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE 1772 - 1834

### FEARS IN SOLITUDE

A green and silent spot, amid the hills,  
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place  
No singing skylark ever poised himself  
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,  
Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on  
All golden with the never-bloomless furze,  
Which now blooms most profusely but the dell,  
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate  
As vernal cornfield, or the unripe flax,  
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,  
The level sunshine glimmers with green light  
Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!  
Which all, methinks, would love, but chiefly he,  
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,  
Knew just so much of folly, as has made  
His early manhood more securely wise!  
Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,  
While from the singing lark (that sings unseen  
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),  
And from the sun, and from the breezy air,  
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame,

And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,  
Made up a meditative joy, and found  
Religious meanings in the forms of Nature!  
And so, his senses gradually wrapt  
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,  
And dreaming hears thee still, o singing lark,  
That singest like an angel in the clouds!

My God! it is a melancholy thing  
For such a man, who would full fain preserve  
His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel  
For all his human brethren — O my God!  
It weighs upon the heart, that he must think  
What uproar and what strife may now be stirring  
This way or that way o'er these silent hills—  
Invasion, and the thunder and the shout,  
And all the crash of onset, fear and rage,  
And undetermined conflict — even now,  
Even now, perchance, and in his native isle  
Carnage and groans beneath this blessed sun!  
We have offended, Oh! my countrymen!  
We have offended very grievously,  
And been most tyrannous From east to west  
A groan of accusation pierces Heaven!  
The wretched plead against us, multitudes  
Countless and vehement, the sons of God,  
Our brethren! Like a cloud that travels on,  
Steamed up from Cairo's swamps of pestilence,  
Even so, my countrymen! have we gone forth  
And borne to distant tribes slavery and pangs,  
And, deadlier far, our vices, whose deep taint  
With slow perdition murders the whole man,  
His body and his soul! Meanwhile, at home,  
All individual dignity and power  
Engulfed in Courts, Committees, Institutions,  
Associations and Societies,  
A vain, speech-mouthing, speech-reporting Guild,  
One Benefit-Club for mutual flattery,

We have drunk up, demure as at a grace,  
Pollutions from the brimming cup of wealth,  
Contemptuous of all honourable rule,  
Yet bartering freedom and the poor man's life  
For gold, as at a market! The sweet words  
Of Christian promise, words that even yet  
Might stem destruction, were they wisely preached,  
Are mutter'd o'er by men, whose tones proclaim  
How flat and wearisome they feel their trade  
Rank scoffers some, but most too indolent  
To deem them falsehoods or to know their truth  
Oh! blasphemous! the Book of Life is made  
A superstitious instrument, on which  
We gabble o'er the oaths we mean to break,  
For all must swear — all and in every place,  
College and wharf, council and justice-court,  
All, all must swear, the briber and the bribed,  
Merchant and lawyer, senator and priest,  
The rich, the poor, the old man and the young,  
All, all make up one scheme of perjury,  
That faith doth reel, the very name of God  
Sounds like a juggler's charm, and, bold with joy,  
Forth from his dark and lonely hiding-place,  
(Portentous sight!) the owlet Atheism,  
Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,  
Drops his blue-fringed lids, and holds them close,  
And hooting at the glorious sun in Heaven,  
Cries out, "Where is it?"

Thankless too for peace,  
(Peace long preserved by fleets and perilous seas)  
Secure from actual warfare, we have loved  
To swell the war-whoop, passionate for war!  
Alas! for ages ignorant of all  
Its ghastlier workings (famine or blue plague,  
Battle, or siege, or flight through wintry snows)  
We, this whole people, have been clamorous  
For war and bloodshed, animating sports,

The which we pay for as a thing to talk of,  
Spectators and not combatants! No guess  
Anticipative of a wrong unfelt,  
No speculation on contingency,  
However dim and vague, too vague and dim  
To yield a justifying cause, and forth,  
(Stuffed out with big preamble, holy names,  
And adjurations of the God of Heaven)  
We send our mandates for the certain death  
Of thousands and ten thousands! Boys and girls,  
And women that would groan to see a child  
Pull off an insect's leg, all read of war  
The best amusement for our morning meal!  
The poor wretch, who has learnt his only prayers  
From curses, who knows scarcely words enough  
To ask a blessing from his Heavenly Father,  
Becomes a fluent phraseman, absolute  
And technical in victories and defeats,  
And all our dainty terms for fratricide,  
Terms which we trundle smoothly o'er our tongues  
Like mere abstractions, empty sounds to which  
We join no feeling and attach no form!  
As if the soldier died without a wound;  
As if the fibres of this godlike frame  
Were gored without a pang, as if the wretch,  
Who fell in battle, doing bloody deeds,  
Passed off to Heaven, translated and not killed!  
As though he had no wife to pine for him,  
No God to judge him! Therefore, evil days  
Are coming on us, O my countrymen!  
And what if all-avenging Providence  
Strong and retributive, should make us know  
The meaning of our words, force us to feel  
The desolation and the agony  
Of our fierce doings?

Spare us yet a while,  
Father and God! O! Spare us yet awhile,  
Oh! let not English women drag their flight

Fainting beneath the burthen of their babes,  
Of the sweet infants that but yesterday  
Laughed at the breast! Sons, brothers, husbands, all  
Who ever gazed with fondness on the forms  
Which grew up with you round the same fireside,  
And all who ever heard the sabbath-bells  
Without the infidel's scorn, make yourselves pure!  
Stand forth! be men! repel an impious foe,  
Impious and false, a light yet cruel race,  
Who laugh away all virtue, mingling mirth  
With deeds of murder, and still promising  
Freedom, themselves too sensual to be free,  
Poison life's amities, and cheat the heart  
Of faith and quiet hope, and all that soothes  
And all that lifts the spirit! Stand we forth,  
Render them back upon the insulted ocean,  
And let them toss as idly on its waves  
As the vile sea-weed, which some mountain-blast  
Swept from our shores! And oh! may we return  
Not with a drunken triumph, but with fear,  
Repenting of the wrongs with which we stung  
So fierce a foe to frenzy!

I have told,  
O Britons! O my brethren! I have told  
Most bitter truth, but without bitterness  
Nor deem my zeal or factious or mistimed,  
For never can true courage dwell with them,  
Who, playing tricks with conscience, dare not look  
At their own vices We have been too long  
Dupes of a deep delusion! Some, belike,  
Groaning with restless enmity, expect  
All change from change of constituted power,  
As if a Government had been a robe,  
On which our vice and wretchedness were tagged  
Like fancy-points and fringes, with the robe  
Pulled off at pleasure Fondly these attach  
A radical causation to a few

Poor drudges of chastising Providence,  
Who borrow all their hues and qualities  
From our own folly and rank wickedness,  
Which gave them birth and nursed them   Others, meanwhile,  
Dote with a mad idolatry, and all  
Who will not fall before their images,  
And yield them worship, they are enemies  
Even of their country!

Such have I been deemed —  
But, O, dear Britain! O my Mother Isle!  
Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy  
To me, a son, a brother, and a friend  
A husband and a father! who revere  
All bonds of natural love, and find them all  
Within the limits of thy rocky shores  
O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!  
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy  
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,  
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,  
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,  
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,  
All adoration of the God in nature,  
All lovely and all honourable things,  
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel  
The joy and greatness of its future being?  
There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul  
Unborrowed from my country   O divine  
And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole  
And most magnificent temple, in the which  
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,  
Loving the God that made me! —

May my fears,  
My filial fears, be vain! and may the vaunts  
And menace of the vengeful enemy  
Pass like the gust, that roared and died away  
In the distant tree which heard, and only heard  
In this low dell, bowed not the delicate grass

But now the gentle dew-fall sends abroad  
The fruit-like perfume of the golden furze,  
The light has left the summit of the hill,  
Though still a sunny gleam lies beautiful,  
Aslant the ivied beacon Now farewell,  
Farewell, awhile, O soft and silent spot!  
On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill,  
Homeward I wind my way, and lo! recalled  
From bodings that have well-nigh wearied me,  
I find myself upon the brow, and pause  
Startled! And after lonely sojourning  
In such a quiet and surrounded nook,  
This burst of prospect here, the shadowy main,  
Dim-tinted, there the mighty majesty  
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich  
And elmy fields, seems like society—  
Conversing with the mind and giving it  
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!  
And now, beloved Stowey! I behold  
Thy church-tower, and, methinks, the four huge elms  
Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend,  
And close behind them, hidden from my view,  
Is my own lowly cottage, where my babe  
And my babe's mother dwell in peace! With light  
And quickening footsteps thitherward I tend,  
Remembering thee, O green and silent dell!  
And grateful, that by nature's quietness  
And solitary musings, all my heart  
Is softened, and made worthy to indulge  
Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR 1775 - 1864

A FOREIGN RULER

He says, *my reign is peace*, so slays  
A thousand in the dead of night  
*Are you all happy now?* he says  
And those he leaves behind cry *quite*  
He swears he will have no contention,  
And sets all nature by the ears,  
He shouts aloud, *No intervention!*  
Invades, and drowns them all in tears

WALTER DE LA MARE b 1873

NAPOLEON

'What is the world, O soldiers?  
It is I  
I, this incessant snow,  
This northern sky,  
Soldiers, this solitude  
Through which we go  
Is I '

ROBERT BROWNING 1812-1889

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon  
A mile or so away,  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming day,  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind

Just as perhaps he mused 'My plans  
'That soar, to earth may fall,  
'Let once my army-leader, Lannes  
'Waver at yonder wall,'—  
Out twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping, nor bridle drew  
Until he reached the mound

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy  
You hardly could suspect—  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two

'Well,' cried he, 'Emperor, by God's grace  
'We've got you Ratisbon'  
'The Marshal's in the market-place,  
'And you'll be there anon  
'To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
'Where I, to heart's desire,  
'Perched him!' The chief's eye flashed, his plans  
Soared up again like fire

The chief's eye flashed but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother-eagle's eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes,  
'You're wounded!' 'Nay,' the soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said  
'I'm killed, Sire!' And his chief beside  
Smiling the boy fell dead

R. L. STEVENSON 1850-1894

### A MARTIAL ELEGY FOR SOME LEAD SOLDIERS

For certain soldiers lately dead  
Our reverent dirge shall here be said  
Them, when their martial leader called,  
No dread preparative appalled,  
But leaden-hearted, leaden-heeled,  
I marked them steadfast in the field  
Death grimly sided with the foe,  
And smote each leaden hero low  
Proudly they perished one by one  
The dread Pea-cannon's work was done!  
O not for them the tears we shed,  
Consigned to their congenial lead,  
But while unmoved their sleep they take,  
We mourn for their dear Captain's sake,  
For their dear Captain, who shall smart  
Both in his pocket and in his heart,  
Who saw his heroes shed their gore  
And lacked a shilling to buy more!

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 1770 - 1850

SONNET

The Column Intended by Buonaparte for a Triumphal Edifice  
in Milan, now Lying by the Way-side in the Simplon Pass

Ambition — following down this far-famed slope  
Her Pioneer, the snow-dissolving Sun,  
While clarions prate of kingdoms to be won—  
Perchance, in future ages, here may stop,  
Taught to mistrust her flattering horoscope  
By admonition from this prostrate Stone!  
Memento uninscribed of Pride o'erthrown,  
Vanity's hieroglyphic, a choice trope  
In Fortune's rhetoric Daughter of the Rock,  
Rest where thy course was stayed by Power divine!  
The Soul transported sees, from hint of thine,  
Crimes which the great Avenger's hand provoke,  
Hears combats whistling o'er the ensanguined heath  
What groans! what shrieks! what quietness in death!

W E AYTOUN 1813-1865

SONNET TO BRITAIN

Halt! Shoulder arms! Recover! As you were!  
Right wheel! Eyes left! Attention! Stand at ease!  
O Britain! O my country! Words like these  
Have made thy name a terror and a fear  
To all the nations Witness Ebro's banks,  
Assaye, Toulouse, Nivelle, and Waterloo,  
Where the grim despot muttered — *Sauve qui peut!*  
And Ney fled darkling — Silence in the ranks!

Inspired by these, amidst the iron crash  
Of armies, in the centre of his troop  
The soldier stands — unmovable, not rash—  
Until the forces of the foeman droop,  
Then knocks the Frenchmen to eternal smash,  
Pounding them into mummy Shoulder, Hoop!

## WATERLOO

Ay, here such valorous deeds were done  
As ne'er were done before,  
Ay, here the reddest wreath was won  
That ever Gallia wore,  
Since Ariosto's wondrous Knight  
Made all the Paynims dance,  
There never dawned a day so bright  
As Waterloo's on France

The trumpet poured its deafening sound,  
Flags fluttered on the gale,  
And cannon roared, and heads flew round  
As fast as summer hail,  
The sabres flashed their light of fear,  
The steeds began to prance,  
The English quaked from front to rear—  
They never quake in France!

The cuirassiers rode in and out  
As fierce as wolves and bears,  
'Twas grand to see them slash about  
Among the English squares!  
And then the Polish Lancer came  
Careening with his lance,  
No wonder Britain blushed for shame,  
And ran away from France!

The Duke of York was killed that day,  
The king was sadly scarred,  
Lord Eldon, as he ran away,  
Was taken by the Guard,  
Poor Wellington with fifty Blues  
Escaped by some strange chance,  
Henceforth I think he'll hardly choose  
To show himself in France

So Buonaparte pitched his tent  
That night in Grosvenor Place,  
And Ney rode straight to Parliament  
And broke the Speaker's mace,  
"Vive l'Empereur" was said and sung  
From Peebles to Penzance,  
The Mayor and Aldermen were hung,  
Which made folk laugh in France

They pulled the Tower of London down,  
They burnt our wooden walls,  
They brought the Pope himself to town,  
And lodged him in St Paul's,  
And Gog and Magog rubbed their eyes,  
Awaking from a trance,  
And grumbled out, in great surprise,  
"Oh, mercy! we're in France!"

They sent a Regent to our Isle,  
The little King of Rome,  
And squibs and crackers all the while  
Blazed in the Place Vendôme,  
And ever since, in arts and power,  
They're making great advance,  
They've had strong beer from that glad hour,  
And sea-coal fires, in France

My uncle, Captain Flanigan,  
Who lost a leg in Spain,  
Tells stories of a little man  
Who died at St Helene,  
But bless my heart, they can't be true,  
I'm sure they're all romance,  
John Bull was beat at Waterloo!  
They'll swear to that in France

T S ELIOT 1888

### TRIUMPHAL MARCH

Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels  
Over the paving  
And the flags And the trumpets And so many eagles  
How many? Count them And such a press of people  
We hardly knew ourselves that day or knew the City  
This is the way to the temple, and we so many crowding the way  
So many waiting, how many waiting? What did it matter, on  
such a day?

Are they coming? No, not yet You can see some eagles  
And hear the trumpets  
Here they come Is he coming?  
The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a perceiving  
We can wait with our stools and our sausages  
What comes first? Can you see? Tell us It is

5,800,000 rifles and carbines,  
102,000 machine guns,  
28,000 trench mortars,  
53,000 field and heavy guns,  
I cannot tell how many projectiles, mines, and fuses,  
13,000 aeroplanes,  
24,000 aeroplane engines,  
50,000 ammunition waggons,  
now 55,000 army waggons,  
11,000 field kitchens,  
1,150 field bakeries

What a time that took Will it be he now? No,  
Those are the golf club Captains, these the Scouts,  
And now the *Société gymnastique de Poissy*  
And now come the Mayor and the Liverymen Look  
There is he now, look  
There is no interrogation in his eyes  
Or in the hands, quiet over the horse's neck,

And the eyes watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent  
O hidden under the dove's wing, hidden in the turtle's breast,  
Under the palmtree at noon, under the running water  
At the still point of the turning world O hidden

Now they go up to the Temple Then the sacrifice  
Now come the virgins bearing urns, urns containing  
Dust  
Dust  
Dust of dust, and now  
Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels  
Over the paving

That is all we could see But how many eagles and how many  
trumpets!

(And Easter Day, we didn't get to the country,  
So we took young Cyril to church And they rang a bell  
And he said right out loud, *crumpets* )

It'll come in handy He's artful Please, will you  
Give us a light ?  
Light  
Light  
*Et les soldats faisaient la hale* ? ILS LA FAISAIENT

SIR EDWARD MARSH

CŒLO TONANTEM

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF HORACE ODES III 5

Jove thundered out of heaven, and straight was known  
Earth's monarch so shall Cæsar stand revealed  
Apparent God, when, East and West o'erthrown,  
Britain and Persia to his rule shall yield

How then could Crassus' vanquished soldiery,  
Sons of the Senate, bred to Roman ways,  
Wive with their captors' women, live and die  
Drilled by old foes, new kinsmen, all their days,

Marsians, Apulians, thrall to Medish kings,  
Forgetful of the name, the robe, the blood,  
And Numa's shield, and Vesta's holy things,  
And living Rome where yet Jove's altar stood ?

Such foul dishonour Regulus foresaw  
Unending, were the foeman's proffered grace  
Not spurned, such presage could his wisdom draw  
Of long disaster to a falling race,

If pity for the captive youth prevailed,  
And thus his words found way 'These eyes have known  
Our standards in the shrines of Carthage trailed,  
Our men, unwounded, lay their weapons down,

Free men of Rome, arms pinioned to their side,  
To slavery marched where once they marched to war,  
Gates that have braved our leaguer, standing wide,  
And fields our fire had wasted, sown once more

Bought back with gold, they will return, you say,  
With doubled spirit ? Oh folly heaped on blame !  
Your wool discoloured, dye it as you may,  
Will it regain its hue, and be the same ?

No, nor true valour, once driven out and spoiled,  
Deigns in her ruined seat to dwell again  
Show me the stag, once in the nets entoiled,  
Will fight another bout, and tell me then

That he who parleyed with a treacherous foe,  
And felt the thong upon his limbs, and lay  
Passive in craven fear of death, will go  
Forth to destroy him in a second fray

Oh base, to seek for life where no life is,  
And peace with war confound! Oh depth of shame!  
Oh mighty Carthage, first of enemies,  
Who on Rome's downfall buldest up thy fame!"

'Tis told, that when his wife and little sons  
Came with their kisses, he, as one disowned,  
Put them away, nor looked upon them once,  
But sternly fixed his eyes upon the ground,

Strengthened the hesitant Fathers to obey  
His word, self-doomed as never man but he,  
Then through his weeping kin he took his way  
To exile, and to immortality

Full well he knew what pains he must abide,  
The torturer's devilry, the screw, the wrack,  
Yet gently thrust his clamouring friends aside,  
And the fond crowd that strove to hold him back,

Just as of old, the long day's business done,  
His clients served, he started on his way  
To green Venafrum by the setting sun,  
Or the calms folds of the Calabrian bay

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON 1809-1892

TO GENERAL HAMLEY

Our birches yellowing and from each  
    The light leaf falling fast,  
While squirrels from our fiery beech  
    Were bearing off the mast,  
You came, and looked and loved the view  
    Long-known and loved by me,  
Green Sussex fading into blue  
    With one gray glimpse of sea,  
And, gazing from this height alone,  
    We spoke of what had been  
Most marvellous in the wars your own  
    Crimean eyes had seen,  
And now—like old-world inns that take  
    Some warrior for a sign  
That therewithin a guest may make  
    True cheer with honest wine—  
Because you heard the lines I read  
    Nor uttered word of blame,  
I dare without your leave to head  
    These rhymings with your name,  
Who know you but as one of those  
    I fain would meet again,  
Yet know you, as your England knows  
    That you and all your men  
Were soldiers to her heart's desire  
    When, in the vanished year,  
You saw the league-long rampart-fire  
    Flare from Tel-el-Kebir  
Thro' darkness, and the foe was driven,  
    And Wolseley overthrew  
Arâbi and the stars in heaven  
    Paled, and the glory grew

WALTER DE LA MARE b 1873

### THE OLD SOLDIER

There came an Old Soldier to my door,  
Asked a crust, and asked no more,  
The wars had thinned him very bare,  
Fighting and marching everywhere,  
With a Fol rol dol rol di do

With nose stuck out, and cheek sunk in,  
A bristling beard upon his chin—  
Powder and bullets and wounds and drums  
Had come to that Soldier as suchlike comes—  
With a Fol rol dol rol di do

’Twas sweet and fresh with buds of May,  
Flowers springing from every spray,  
And when he had supped the Old Soldier trolled  
The song of youth that never grows old,  
Called Fol rol dol rol di do

Most of him rags, and all of him lean,  
And the belt round his belly drawn tightsome in,  
He lifted his peaked old grizzled head,  
And these were the very same words he said—  
A Fol-rol-dol-rol-*di*-do

ANONYMOUS C 1660

AN OLD SOULDIER OF THE QUEENS

*from*

MERRY DROLLERY

Of an old Souldier of the Queens,  
With an old motley coat, and a Maumsie nose,  
And an old Jerkin that's out at the elbows,  
And an old pair of boots, drawn on without hose  
Stuft with rags instead of toes,  
And an old Souldier of the Queens,  
And the Queens old Souldier

With an old rusty sword that's hackt with blows,  
And an old dagger to scare away the crows,  
And an old horse that reels as he goes,  
And an old saddle that no man knows,  
And an old Souldier of the Queens,  
And the Queens old Souldier

With his old wounds in Eighty Eight,  
Which he recover'd, at *Tilbury* fight,  
With an old Pasport that never was read,  
That in his old travels stood him in great stead,  
And an old Souldier of the Queens,  
And the Queens old Souldier

With his old Gun, and his Bandeliers,  
And an old head-piece to keep warm his ears,  
With an old shirt is grown to wrack,  
With a huge Louse, with a great list on his back,  
Is able to carry a Pedlar and his Pack,  
And an old Souldier of the Queens,  
And the Queens old Souldier

With an old Quean to lie by his side,  
That in old time had been pockifi'd,  
He's now rid to *Bohemia* to fight with his foes,  
And he swears by his Valour he'll have better cloaths,  
Or else he'll lose legs, arms, fingers, and toes,  
And he'll come again, when no man knows,  
    And an old Souldier of the Queens,  
    And the Queens old Souldier

W S GILBERT 1836-1911

### THE MODERN MAJOR-GENERAL

I am the very pattern of a modern Major-General,  
I've information vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I know the kings of England, and I quote the fights historical,  
From Marathon to Waterloo, in order categorical,  
I'm very well acquainted, too, with matters mathematical,  
I understand equations, both the simple and quadratical,  
About binomial theorem I'm teeming with a lot o' news,  
With interesting facts about the square of the hypotenuse  
I'm very good at integral and differential calculus,  
I know the scientific names of beings animalculous  
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I am the very model of a modern Major-General

I know our mythic history—KING ARTHUR's and SIR CARADOC's,  
I answer hard acrostics, I've a pretty taste for paradox,  
I quote in elegiacs all the crimes of HELIOGABALUS,  
In conics I can floor peculiarities parabolous  
I tell undoubted RAPHAELS from GERARD DOWS and ZOFFANIES,  
I know the croaking chorus from the "Frogs" of ARISTOPHANES,  
Then I can hum a fugue, of which I've heard the music's din afore,  
And whistle all the airs from that confounded nonsense "Pinafore"

Then I can write a washing-bill in Babylonian cuneiform,  
And tell you every detail of CARACTACUS's uniform  
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I am the very model of a modern Major-Gineral

In fact, when I know what is meant by "mamelon" and "ravelin,"  
When I can tell at sight a Chassepôt rifle from a javelin,  
When such affairs as *sorties* and surprises I'm more wary at,  
And when I know precisely what is meant by Commissariat,  
When I have learnt what progress has been made in modern gunnery,  
When I know more of tactics than a novice in a nunnery,  
In short, when I've a smattering of elementary strategy,  
You'll say a better Major-Gineral has never *sat* a gee—  
For my military knowledge, though I'm plucky and adventury,  
Has only been brought down to the beginning of the century  
But still in learning vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I am the very model of a modern Major-Gineral!

W B YEATS 1865-1939

THE ROAD AT MY DOOR

An affable Irregular  
A heavily-built Falstaffian man,  
Comes crackling jokes of civil war  
As though to die by gunshot were  
The finest play under the sun

A brown Lieutenant and his men,  
Half dressed in national uniform,  
Stand at my door, and I complain  
Of the foul weather, hail and rain,  
A peartree broken by the storm

I count those feathered balls of soot  
The moor-hen guides upon the stream  
To silence the envy in my thought,  
And turn towards my chamber, caught  
In the cold snows of a dream

APOLLYON

How shall unsainted John  
Fight that Apollyon,  
William the plain man  
And Frank the sane man  
His fire-darts parry ?  
How shall we decent men,  
Tom, Dick and Harry,  
Firm though our will,  
Fortitude, skill,  
Hope to cope with and overthrow  
A maniac foe,  
Ravings and cold-blood deeds that glow  
With fires of evil beyond our ken,  
Deliberate murderers, furious liars ?

Matched with extremest lies,  
Weak is our compromise,  
Wholeness of dark sin,  
Or pride of stark sin  
From hope of God parted,  
Jeer at our virtue's mean,  
Mock the good-hearted,  
Hate and despair  
Ride on the air,  
Camp, and trample the earth and seize  
What forfeit they please,  
Freedom, honour, from dwellers at ease,  
While, yeomen at bay, we fend us between  
A God half-forgotten and Hell-driven foemen

Fight we no mortal foes  
Only, from Hell there goes,  
Prince of all evil,  
The banqueted Devil

Grand cosmopolitan,  
Diplomat everywhere,  
Sleek man or jolly man,  
Wearing disguise,  
Circumspect, wise,  
Dulling and lulling us, teaching the soul  
His moderate rôle,  
Respectability's aureole,  
Abolishing sin with a smooth veneer  
And social disease with a brand-new polish

One and the same is he  
Through all variety,  
Whether he drowse us  
With syrup, or rouse us  
With venom of fury,  
Proffer to each plain  
Member of jury,  
Pillar of State,  
Churchman sedate,  
Piety's diet of flat routine,  
Or terrible wine  
Pour for his chosen, for those who dine  
At the gory banquet of Liberty slain,  
Lusty lieutenants who share his glory

Foulness and filth are done  
Under the mid-day sun,  
Itching dreamers  
And loud blasphemers  
Hail 'love' where lust is,  
Christen a nameless  
Cruelty 'justice'  
Nations who bleed  
Cry to be freed  
How shall we now, at the last, last hour  
Withstand this power,  
We, with moderate virtue for dower ?

And reason and manners and mild address,  
How shall they parley with insolent treason ?

Though we defeat at length  
Men and their fleshly strength,  
Still the evangel  
Of Hell's dark angel  
Trumpets him master  
Rises the Arch-fiend  
Big with disaster,  
Sleep and sin  
Betray us within—  
O God, let thy rod chastise and break us,  
Wild men wake us,  
Saints in extremity mar and make us !  
Teach us extremes, who once didst send  
Thy well-loved Son, through death to reach us,

*Teach us, as He in death did feel  
The antagonist's bruise upon His heel,  
Yet dying bruised that horned head  
And rose a conqueror from the dead,  
Teach us, who feel Earth's anguished wrong,  
A good that's more extreme and strong  
Than evil, rouse in us that good  
Through His Cross and through His Blood*

EDMUND BLUNDEN b 1896

### SOME TALK OF PEACE—

Dark War, exploding loud mephitic mines  
Or with a single shot destroying twenty,  
Was in a way reserved, polite and dainty  
Then there was not much felt of cold designs,  
Murder that chanced seemed past man's guiding-lines,  
And conscience never flushed for that grim thro

Peace, lovely lady, is too fine to shout  
Her power abroad, she seldom lays us low  
As the machine-guns stretched the storm-troops out,  
She gives us time to answer Yes or No  
She may not kill, she even keeps alive  
Those whom their faces or their foes deprive  
Of joy and equity, and we live in doubt  
Whether her sins or War's more misery sow

W J TURNER b 1889

### TALKING WITH SOLDIERS

The mind of the people is like mud,  
From which arise strange and beautiful things,  
But mud is none the less mud,  
Though it bear orchids and prophesying Kings,  
Dreams, trees, and water's bright babblings

It has found form and colour and light,  
The cold glimmer of the ice-wrapped Poles,  
It has called a far-off glow Arcturus,  
And some pale weeds, lilies of the valley

It has imagined Virgil, Helen and Cassandra;  
The sack of Troy, and the weeping for Hector—

Rearing stark up 'mid all this beauty  
In the thick, dull neck of Ajax

There is a dark Pine in Lapland,  
And the great, figured Horn of the Reindeer  
Moving soundlessly across the snow,  
Is its twin brother, double-dreamed,  
In the mind of a far-off people

It is strange that a little mud  
Should echo with sounds, syllables, and letters,  
Should rise up and call a mountain Popocatapetl,  
And a green leafed wood Oleander

These are the ghosts of invisible things,  
There is no Lapland, no Helen and no Hector,  
And the Reindeer is a darkening of the brain,  
And Oleander is but Oleander

Mary Magdalena and the vine Lachrymae Christi,  
Were like ghosts up the ghost of Vesuvius,  
As I sat and drank wine with the soldiers,  
As I sat in the Inn on the mountain,  
Watching the shadows in my mind

The mind of the people is like mud  
Where are the imperishable things,  
The ghosts that flicker in the brain—  
Silent women, orchids, and prophesying Kings,  
Dreams, trees, and water's bright babblings?

W H AUDEN b 1907

## REFUGEE BLUES

Say this city has ten million souls,  
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes  
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place for us

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,  
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there  
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,  
Every spring it blossoms anew  
Old passports can't do that, my dear, old passports can't do that

The consul banged the table and said,  
'If you've got no passport you're officially dead'  
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive

Went to a committee, they offered me a chair,  
Asked me politely to return next year  
But where shall we go today, my dear, but where shall we go today ?

Came to a public meeting, the speaker got up and said  
'If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread',  
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky,  
It was Hitler over Europe, saying 'They must die',  
O we were in his mind, my dear, O we were in his mind

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,  
Saw a door opened and a cat let in  
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, but they weren't German  
Jews

Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,  
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free.  
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees,  
They had no politicians and sang at their ease  
They weren't the human race, my dear, they weren't the human  
race

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,  
A thousand windows and a thousand doors,  
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow,  
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro  
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me

ANONYMOUS WRITTEN 809 A.D.

*Translated from the Chinese by Arthur Waley*

### THE PRISONER

Tartars led in chains,  
Tartars led in chains!

Their ears pierced, their faces bruised—they are driven into the  
land of Ch'in

The Son of Heaven took pity on them and would not have them slain  
He sent them away to the south-east, to the lands of Wu and Yueh  
A petty officer in a yellow coat took down their names and surnames  
They were led from the city of Ch'ang-an under escort of an armed  
guard

Their bodies were covered with the wounds of arrows, their bones  
stood out from their cheeks

They had grown so weak they could only march a single stage a day  
In the morning they must satisfy hunger and thirst with neither  
plate nor cup

At night they must lie in their dirt and rags on beds that stank  
with filth

Suddenly they came to the Yangtze River and remembered the  
waters of Chiao

With lowered hands and levelled voices they sobbed a muffled song  
Then one Tartar lifted up his voice and spoke to the other Tartars,  
"Your sorrows are none at all compared with *my* sorrows"

Those that were with him in the same band asked to hear his tale  
As he tried to speak the words were choked by anger

He told them "I was born and bred in the town of Liang-yuan  
In the frontier wars of Ta-li I fell into the Tartars' hands

Since the days the Tartars took me alive forty years have passed  
They put me into a coat of skins tied with a belt of rope

Only on the first of the first month might I wear my Chinese dress  
As I put on my coat and arranged my cap, how fast the tears flowed!

I made in my heart a secret vow I would find a way home  
I hid my plan from my Tartar wife and the children she had borne

me in the land

I thought to myself, 'It is well for me that my limbs are still strong,'  
And yet, being old, in my heart I feared I should never live to return  
The Tartar chieftains shoot so well that the birds are afraid to fly  
From the risk of their arrows I escaped alive and fled swiftly home  
Hiding all day and walking all night, I crossed the Great Desert  
Where clouds are dark and the moon black and the sands eddy in  
the wind

Frightened, I sheltered at the Green Grave, where the frozen grasses  
are few

Stealthily I crossed the Yellow River, at night, on the thin ice,  
Suddenly I heard Han drums and the sound of soldiers coming  
I went to meet them at the road-side, bowing to them as they came  
But the moving horsemen did not hear that I spoke the Han tongue  
Their Captain took me for a Tartar born and had me bound in  
chains

They are sending me away to the south-east, to a low and swampy  
land

No one now will take pity on me resistance is all in vain  
Thinking of this, my voice chokes and I ask of Heaven above  
Was I spared from death only to spend the rest of my years in sorrow?  
My native village of Liang-yuan I shall not see again  
My wife and children in the Tartars' land I have fruitlessly deserted.

When I fell among Tartars and was taken prisoner, I pined for the  
land of Han  
Now that I am back in the land of Han, they have turned me into  
a Tartar  
Had I but known what my fate would be, I would not have started  
home!  
For the two lands, so wide apart, are alike in the sorrow they bring  
Tartar prisoners in chains!  
Of all the sorrows of all the prisoners mine is the hardest to bear!  
Never in the world has so great a wrong befallen the lot of man,—  
A Han heart and a Han tongue set in the body of a Turk ”

RICHARD CHURCH b 1893

*from*

TWENTIETH CENTURY PSALTER

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY—EVENING

If, when the century is done,  
I shall be living still,  
A centenarian whose chill  
Blood in a trickle, frail and thin,  
Creeps from vein to vein, each one  
A monument above the skin,  
I shall have known, maybe forgotten,  
Two world-disconcerting wars  
Save for some intellectual scars  
I shall remain unmoved  
By what those conflicts proved

On the warm sunside of a wall,  
Beneath the willow whose trunk grows rotten,  
Sheltered to eastward by the quince  
Aged, over-rough and arid since  
Its harvest-home of irony,  
I may babble and recall  
A tyrant's end, an empire's fall

More likely I shall turn an eye  
To nearer things, to further things,  
Mysteries of age and infancy,  
Some elements that have remained  
Unmastered, unexplained,  
The sparrow's nature, the vermin's worth  
The mirage beauty makes when youth  
Burns with desire and calls it truth,  
A mother's voice that haunts  
The century through, but cannot tell  
What desperate thing it wants  
I, from my soul, as from a well  
Disused and deep, shall draw with mirth  
These words on which wise men may dwell  
'I am a stranger upon earth '

### THE LAST WORD

Creep into thy narrow bed,  
Creep, and let no more be said!  
Vain, thy onset! All stands fast,  
Thou thyself must break at last

Let the long contention cease!  
Geese are swans, and swans are geese  
Let them have it how they will!  
Thou art tired, best be still!

They out-talked thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee  
Better men fared thus before thee,  
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,  
Hotly charged — and broke at last

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!  
Let the victors, when they come,  
When the forts of folly fall,  
Find thy body by the wall

ANONYMOUS

### THE FORT OF RATHANGAN

The fort over against the oak-wood,  
Once it was Bruidge's, it was Cathal's  
It was Aed's, it was Ailill's,  
It was Conaing's, it was Cuilne's,  
And it was Maelduin's,  
The fort remains after each in his turn—  
And the kings asleep in the ground

*from*

AMOURS DE VOYAGE

Victory! Victory! — Yes! ah, yes, thou republican Zion,  
Truly the kings of the earth are gathered and gone by together,  
Doubtless they marvelled to witness such things, were astonished,  
and so forth

Victory! Victory! Victory! — Ah, but it is, believe me,  
Easier, easier far, to intone the chant of the martyr  
Than to indite any pæan of any victory Death may  
Sometimes be noble, but life, at the best, will appear an illusion  
While the great pain is upon us, it is great, when it is over,  
Why, it is over The smoke of the sacrifice rises to heaven,  
Of a sweet savour, no doubt, to Somebody, but on the altar,  
Lo, there is nothing remaining but ashes and dirt and ill odour  
So it stands, you perceive, the labial muscles that swelled with  
Vehement evolution of yesterday Marseillaises,  
Articulations sublime of defiance and scorning, to-day col-  
Lapse and languidly mumble, while men and women and papers  
Scream and re-scream to each other the chorus of Victory Well, but  
I am thankful they fought, and glad that the Frenchmen were beaten

DAVID GASCOYNE b 1919

SONNET

THE UNCERTAIN BATTLE

Away the horde rode, in a storm of hail  
And steel-blue lightning Hurtled by the wind  
Into their eardrums from behind the hill  
Came in increasing bursts the startled sound  
Of trumpets in the unseen hostile camp —  
Down through a raw black hole in heaven stared  
The horror-blanchéd moon's eye Across the swamp  
Five ravens flapped, and the storm disappeared  
Soon afterwards, like them, into that pit  
Of Silence which lies waiting to consume  
Even the braggart World itself at last  
The candle in the hermit's cave burned out  
At dawn, as usual — No-one ever came  
Back down the hill, to say which side had lost

WALTER DE LA MARE b 1873

### THE SONG OF SOLDIERS

As I sat musing by the frozen dyke,  
There was one man marching with a bright steel pike,  
Marching in the dayshine like a ghost came he,  
And behind me was the moaning and the murmur of the sea

As I sat musing, 'twas not one but ten—  
Rank on rank of ghostly soldiers marching o'er the fen,  
Marching in the misty air they showed in dreams to me,  
And behind me was the shouting and the shattering of the sea

As I sat musing, 'twas a host in dark array,  
With their horses and their cannon wheeling onward to the fray,  
Moving like a shadow to the fate the brave must dree,  
And behind me roared the drums, rang the trumpets of the sea

GEORGE WILLIAM RUSSELL (A E) 1867-1935

MUTINY

That blazing galleon the sun,  
This dusky coracle I ride,  
Both under secret orders sail,  
And swim upon the selfsame tide

The fleet of stars, my boat of soul,  
By perilous magic mountains pass,  
Or lie where no horizons gleam  
Fainting upon a sea of glass

Come, break the seals and tell us now  
Upon what enterprise we roam  
To storm what city of the gods  
Or — sail for the green fields of home

W J TURNER b 1889

## THE HERO

To be brave is not enough,  
It is not enough to be rough,  
To be smooth is not enough,  
Cunning is not enough,  
It is not enough to know the truth  
Vengeance is not enough,  
Pity is not enough, nor is ruth,  
Ruthlessness is not enough  
Even righteousness does not make a man of worth  
The way of salvation is a hard and narrow path,  
Devious and hidden,  
It is not disclosed to him who does what he is bidden,  
Even constant persistence  
Along the line of most resistance  
Is not enough, is not enough

He who would be a hero let him weep,  
But for others, not for himself  
Upright, he must also know how to creep,  
He does not even trust the secret passion in his heart,  
He knows that to be a hero  
Is like the mathematical zero  
In itself it is nothing but it multiplies by ten  
The virtues of *other* men  
He must be so sane that he may appear mad,  
So good that he may often appear bad,  
So ordinary that nobody knows that it is he,  
For he is only the man that everybody would be  
If he followed the secret passion in his heart  
And ever, inwardly, in compassion,  
Let him weep, let him weep

WALT WHITMAN 1819-1892

## RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage must in time be  
utterly lost,  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly  
Softly wash again, and ever again, this soiled world,  
For my enemy is dead — a man divine as myself is dead  
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin—I draw near,  
I bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the  
coffin

A E HOUSMAN 1858-1936

## SOLDIER FROM THE WARS RETURNING

Soldier from the wars returning,  
Spoiler of the taken town,  
Here is ease that asks not earning,  
Turn you in and sit you down

Peace is come and wars are over,  
Welcome you and welcome all,  
While the charger crops the clover  
And his bridle hangs in stall

Now no more of winters biting,  
Filth in trench from fall to spring,  
Summers full of sweat and fighting  
For the Kesar or the King

Rest you, charger, rust you, bridle,  
Kings and kesars, keep your pay,  
Soldier set you down and idle  
At the inn of night for aye

*from*

### THE PICCOLOMINI

'Twas the first leisure of my life O tell me,  
What is the meed and purpose of the toil,  
The painful toil, which robbed me of my youth,  
Left me a heart unsoul'd and solitary,  
A spirit uninformed, unornamented  
For the camp's stir and crowd and ceaseless larum,  
The neighing war-horse, the air-shattering trumpet,  
The unvaried, still-returning hour of duty,  
Word of command, and exercise of arms—  
There's nothing here, there's nothing in all this  
To satisfy the heart, the gasping heart!  
Mere bustling nothingness, where the soul is not—  
This cannot be the sole felicity,  
These cannot be man's best and only pleasures  
O! day thrice lovely! when at length the soldier  
Returns home into life, when he becomes  
A fellow-man among his fellow-men  
The colours are unfurled, the cavalcade  
Marshals, and now the buzz is hushed, and hark!  
Now the soft peace-march beats, home, brothers, home!  
The caps and helmets are all garlanded  
With green boughs, the last plundering of the fields  
The city gates fly open of themselves,  
They need no longer the petard to tear them  
The ramparts are all filled with men and women,  
With peaceful men and women, that send onwards  
Kisses and welcomes upon the air,  
Which they make breezy with affectionate gestures  
From all the towers rings out the merry peal,  
The joyous vespers of a bloody day  
O happy man, O fortunate! for whom  
The well-known door, the faithful arms are open,  
The faithful tender arms with mute embracing

JOHN CLARE 1793 - 1864

THE RETURNED SOLDIER

The soldier, full of battles and renown,  
And gaping wonder of each quiet lown,  
And strange to every face he knew so well,  
Comes once again in this old town to dwell  
But man alone is changed, the very tree  
He sees again where once he used to swee,  
And the old fields where once he tented sheep,  
And the old mole-hills where he used to leap,  
And the old bush where once he found a nest  
Are just the same, and pleasure fills his breast  
He sees the old path where he used to play  
At chock and marbles many a summer day,  
And loves to wander where he went a boy,  
And fills his heart with pleasure and with joy

PATRIC DICKINSON b 1914

## WORLD WITHOUT END

A world is breaking   Midnight's bell rings down  
The fable-founded stones of palace walls,  
The swallows and the merchants all are flown,  
The rooftree of the temple rocks and falls  
Yet peopled is the fallen mart and court,  
The altar served whatever ill be done,  
The forms of man's unalterable thought  
Carve still their timeless perfect Parthenon

Age cools the fevered stars   they fall, they die  
Stone crumbles, iron rusts, to thankful rest  
Man's spirit rooted in eternity  
Beats on inviolate within the breast  
Of time, and grows not cold nor hard nor old,  
Whatever cloaks of flesh impede and mar,  
Building anew each towering-tumbling world  
From dust, from fallen star

THE WORLD'S GREAT AGE BEGINS ANEW

The world's great age begins anew,  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn  
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains  
From waves serener far,  
A new Peneus rolls his fountains  
Against the morning-star  
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep  
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,  
Fraught with a later prize,  
Another Orpheus sings again,  
And loves, and weeps, and dies,  
A new Ulysses leaves once more  
Calypso for his native shore

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,  
If earth Death's scroll must be!  
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy  
Which dawns upon the free  
Although a subtler Sphinx renew  
Riddles of death Thebes never knew

Another Athens shall arise,  
And to remoter time  
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,  
The splendour of its prime,  
And leave, if nought so bright may live,  
All earth can take or Heaven can give

Saturn and Love their long repose  
Shall burst, more bright and good  
Than all who fell, than One who rose,  
    Than many unsubdued  
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,  
But votive tears and symbol flowers

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?  
    Cease! must men kill and die?  
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn  
    Of bitter prophecy  
The world is weary of the past,  
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

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